The BOY SCOUTS in the GREAT FLOOD

SCOUT MASTER ROBERT SHALER

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23

Lloyd Jackman

THE BOY SCOUTS

IN THE

GREAT FLOOD

BY

SCOUT MASTER ROBERT SHALER

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The Boy Scouts in the Great Flood.

CHAPTER I.

SIGNS OF COMING TROUBLE.

"I'm sick of seeing it raining, and that's a fact, Hugh. Seems to me it's been pouring down in bucketfuls for a whole week now!"

"Three days, to be exact, Billy. The worst is yet to come, I'm afraid."

"You'll have to explain that conundrum to me, Hugh, because I don't seem to catch on to what you mean."

"Stop and think what a tremendous lot of snow fell last winter, Billy. Everybody in Oakvale said it beat the record. And now they report that it's started melting at a great rate in the mountains. And here's the rain and sudden warm weather."

"That would be a bad combination, for a fact!"

"It might make a serious flood for all the valley below. As we came along on the train that brought us here, I noticed the water was lapping the embankment in a number of places. I hope they don't have a washout that would keep us marooned here in Lawrence, and away from home."

The boy whose name was Billy, and who was a good-natured looking, stoutly built chap, dressed, underneath his raincoat, in the khaki of a scout, whistled and allowed a gleam of additional interest to sweep across his face as he exclaimed:

"Gee whittaker! That *would* be an interesting experience! And Hugh, two members in good standing of the Wolf Patrol, Oakvale Troop of Boy Scouts, might find some bully opportunities for showing what scouts can do in emergencies. Between you and me I don't know but what I'd be glad of a chance to be marooned in the flood belt, so as to watch the circus."

The two lads were Hugh Hardin and Billy Worth, whose names have become household words to such boys as have had the pleasure of reading previous volumes of this series.

Since there may be new readers who are making the acquaintance of the lively members of the famous Wolf Patrol for the first time, perhaps it would be only fair for us to turn back a little and say something concerning Hugh and his friends.

At first, the new movement had not taken hold in Oakvale with any great speed, so that the Wolf Patrol composed the entire membership of the troop. But Hugh Hardin, Billy Worth, Bud Morgan, Arthur Cameron, and the other members began to have such a grand time that more boys evinced an ardent desire to join.

So another patrol had been started, and the good work continued from month to month, until, at the time this story opens, there were the Hawks under Walter Osborne, the Otters with Alec Sands as leader, the Fox Patrol in charge of Don Miller, and a new detachment to be called the Owls, which Lige Corbley had recently been organizing.

Besides being the leader of the Wolf Patrol, Hugh sometimes acted as assistant scout mas- retired army officer who gave considerable ter in the absence of Lieutenant Denmead, a

time to the boys, for whom he felt sincere affection.

These lads had many times been in camp on the slopes of Old Stormberg Mountain, near their native town; and in and upon the clear waters of the lake they had paddled, fished, swam, and enjoyed every aquatic sport known to them.

Many of them were posted in all the valuable knowledge that a true scout deems essential to his well-being. Occasions had arisen whereby certain favored members of the troop had been enabled to pass through rather remarkable experiences in other sections of the country.

One of these trips, detailed at length in earlier volumes, took them to the encampment of the state militia, where the boys were enabled to prove their mettle by serving in the Signal Corps. From the commander they received many compliments on account of their proficiency with the flags and in heliograph work.

Some of them had even taken a trip to the Sunny South, visiting the coast region in Florida, where they found a chance to assist the

Life Saving crew in their work of rescuing shipwrecked mariners from watery graves.

At another time, they were given the privilege of being in company with the Naval Reserve Corps aboard a Government war vessel at the annual drill. Thus they learned a great deal more about the means of coast defense which Uncle Sam has at his disposal than they could ever have picked up second hand or from books.

These experiences, and many others that have been treated in detail in the preceding volumes, had made seasoned veterans of some of the Oakvale Scouts. Hugh and Billy in particular had gone through so many different adventures that they often had occasion to wonder what would come along next on the program.

Their last real exploit had been the cleaning up of their native town. For the accomplishment of this useful service they had received the unstinted thanks of the clubwomen, who had long wrestled with the problem without being able, unassisted, to accomplish any reformation.

When the scouts took hold, backed by these

public-spirited women, who proceeded to see that the ordinances were strictly enforced, a wonderful change came over the whole community. Previous to that time, at every windstorm, the streets were a sight to behold—filthy with flying papers and all sorts of trash. But quickly order came out of chaos, despite the plottings of a set of mean boys who endeavored to frustrate the work of renovation.

And now Oakvale was known as a model town in so far as cleanliness was concerned. Why, it seemed as though everyone living there took special pride in keeping up the good work. If a stranger carelessly happened to throw away the wrapper from a newspaper he had taken from the postoffice, the chances were ten to one half a dozen boys, or even small girls, in fact, would chase after him to ask him to please pick it up and deposit it in one of the big cans marked "I EAT TRASH" that stood at convenient corners of the main thoroughfares.

But when we meet Hugh and his best chum on the present occasion, they are far removed from their home town. It came about in this way, and after all was one of those simple mat-

ters that so frequently arise to throw people in the way of new and novel experiences.

Hugh's folks had occasion to send a valuable package to a lawyer who lived in the city of Lawrence, situated over a hundred miles from Oakvale. Of course, had they chosen, this could have been dispatched by express; but it happened that, in order that he sign papers before witnesses, a personal interview with the gentleman was necessary.

So Hugh had been delegated to take the little journey, for no one doubted his sterling ability, or that he would accomplish every detail with scrupulous exactness, since his record along such lines spoke for itself.

Billy Worth decided to accompany him, pretending that, with such a valuable paper in his possession, Hugh needed a guard to keep him from being held up on the road and robbed. The truth of the matter was, that Billy just felt like taking the trip since it was during the Easter holidays, and he chanced to have money enough in his savings bank to cover the expenses.

They were on the way to the lawyer's office while expressing their several opinions, as al-

ready given, with regard to the bad state of the weather. It was their intention, after the interview had been accomplished and all details carried out to the letter, to return home at once by the first train.

As had happened repeatedly before in their careers, their well-laid plans were destined to be rudely upset by circumstances over which neither of the boys had any control. In playing them this little trick, a favoring fortune placed it within their power to witness, and take part in, some of the most remarkable scenes of any that had come within the scope of their experience.

They had never been in the little city of Lawrence before, but since most of the business houses were located on the main street they had little difficulty in finding the offices of the lawyer to whom Hugh had been sent.

Mr. Jocelyn knew of their coming; indeed, was expecting their arrival on the eleven-thirty train. Much of their trip, however, on account of the threatening waters, had been accomplished at diminished speed. It was now a full hour after the set time.

The attorney had made all allowances for

the delay, having doubtless called up the station agent on the 'phone, and learned just why the train from the East was so late.

The boys found Mr. Jocelyn waiting for them and with everything ready, so that the object of Hugh's journey could be speedily and successfully carried out.

A half hour afterward the two lads descended from the office of the lawyer. Hugh felt his pocket in which he had pinned the precious document that was the cause of his visit to Lawrence with satisfaction.

Mr. Jocelyn had apologized for not asking them to stay to lunch with him. He lived some miles out of town, and intended to hurry back home immediately, as he had a sick wife whose condition gave him much anxiety. Besides, he lived not very far from the river, and the rising waters also added to his grave concern.

It was a matter of no consequence whatever to Hugh and Billy where they ate, so long as the food was fairly decent, and their money held out. Accustomed to camp fare, they knew how to take things as they found them, and seldom made any complaint; which philosophy, after all, is one of the finest traits any lad can

have, and one that scouts are apt to have ingrained into their dispositions after a few camping tests.

"We can't get out of here until that two-thirty-seven train for the East," Hugh was saying, as they swung along the main street. The sky overhead was heavy gray, and threatened to send down another downpour of rain at any time to add to the misery of the situation.

"I noticed that there was a pretty good lunch counter down at the railroad station," remarked Billy. "You see, some of the trains make a meal stop here at Lawrence. So they prepare for a rush of custom. I reckon we can fill up there, and be handy for the train when it comes along."

"A good idea, Billy, to hit two birds with one stone," declared Hugh. "While I think of it, there's another thing we might do at the same time."

"What's that, Hugh?"

"We have to pass the postoffice on the way down to the station, you may remember," said the patrol leader.

"Yes, I saw where it was," Billy replied.

"That habit of noticing things, which scouts are drilled in, can be made use of by a fellow everywhere. Nowadays I'm always looking to the right and to the left, and let me tell you it's mighty few things that escape my eye. But tell me what the postoffice has to do with our going back home. You don't think of sending that paper by mail after all, I hope, Hugh?"

"After going to all the trouble I have?" cried the other. "Well, I should think not, Billy. It's a whole lot safer in my pocket than with the mails, even if I registered the package. But about the postoffice—I just happened to remember that it's a part of the program daily, at our town, to receive the Government weather report, and post the same on the bulletin board. I suppose they do likewise here in Lawrence."

"Oh, I see now what you're after," observed Billy hastily. "You think that, with these unusual conditions hanging over this section of country, Uncle Sam might get out special flood reports and predictions."

"That's it," Hugh declared. "I've got an idea something like that must have happened, because when we were passing the postoffice

I could see quite a crowd hanging around, mostly men; and Billy, they seemed to be talking in knots, as though discussing something mighty serious."

"And Hugh, that crowd is bigger than ever now. Look yonder, and you can see how it stretches out into the street. People are heading that way, too, from all directions, you notice. It looks to me as if there is something doing that has all the earmarks of a tragedy."

The two boys turned grave faces toward each other. Although Billy may have spoken rather light-heartedly about his desire to witness a flood, at the same time he could appreciate something of the horror that always attends such a catastrophe; and the prospect of being involved in so sweeping a disaster gave him a strange thrill in the region of his heart.

They hastened their footsteps. Others were to be seen running toward the postoffice, and often stopping to make inquiries of those they knew. Since the two members of the Wolf Patrol were absolute strangers in town, they did not depend on getting their information at second hand, but pushed their way through the gathering crowd, until they found themselves

inside the building given over to the service of the postoffice department.

"Here you are, over this way!" said Hugh, as he elbowed through the thick mass of humanity, and on all sides they began to hear gloomy expressions and forebodings.

There was a paper posted on the wall, which engaged the attention of the surging throng. The scouts saw that there was a line or two of typewriting on it, which they managed to read with bated breath, and this was what the notice said:

"Heavy rains predicted for to-night and to-morrow all through the Eastern section. Flood conditions will prevail, possibly to an unprecedented extent in some quarters."

CHAPTER II.

STRANDED FAR AWAY FROM HOME.

"What do you think about it, Hugh?" asked Billy, after they had allowed themselves to be pushed along by the surging, anxious crowd, and found themselves once more outside the postoffice building, headed toward the railroad station.

"Looks like a bad job, I'm afraid," replied the patrol leader. "You see, the river runs past Lawrence, and already its bank is full with the flood, which is rising right along. I heard one man say it was up to the highest notch on record. If rain keeps coming, there is no telling what terrible calamity might hit all this section of country."

Billy drew a long breath.

"I want to take back something I said without thinking twice, Hugh. I guess, after all, a flood isn't anything to laugh at. The look on the faces of those men and women at the postoffice gave me a bad feeling."

"Well," said the scout leader seriously,

"they are afraid that a flood will spell ruin for some of them. Houses may be carried away, and barns broken into little bits. All sorts of valuable farm animals are apt to be drowned. And sometimes even people in the bargain find themselves marooned in their homes without food, and expecting to be afloat on the flood at any minute. No, there's a heap more of tragedy about a flood than comedy, let me tell you, Billy."

"I'm wondering about our train, Hugh."

"You mean whether it can get here or not? Between you and me, Billy, I'd say the chances were all against us seeing home to-night!"

"Whew!"

After that exclamation "Billy the Wolf," as he was often called by his friends, relapsed into silence for a brief space of time; but it was hard for him to keep from expressing the thoughts that surged through his brain, so that presently he started once more to say something.

"Hugh, I've noticed a few boys in scout suits around here since we came. One fellow even gave me the high sign, as though he wanted to be friendly. I wonder now if they have

an organization, and whether we couldn't get in touch with the crowd in case we find ourselves marooned here in the flood time."

"I went to the trouble to look that up before we left home, and I learned that they used to have a good strong unit here in Lawrence two years back," Hugh informed him. "But it seems that it's taken to losing its grip on the boys. They lost the scout master who had done most of the work of building the troop up, and ever since things have grown from bad to worse. Just now they seldom meet, and seem to lack all the enthusiasm that is necessary to success in any organization."

"Well, there are boys who still wear the khaki," declared Billy, "and if it happens that we do find ourselves kept here, we might try and get them together, so as to organize a relief corps of scouts."

"That's not a bad idea, Billy, and I'll remember it," declared Hugh. "Here we are at the station, and the next thing to do is to get a feed."

"I'm jolly well ready for a layout, let me tell you," chuckled Billy. "Breakfast at seven, and it's now nearly one. Think of that for

a record, and never a bite in between—well, I did have a couple of apples on the train, three bananas, and that candy; but those sorts of things never count with me. Now for a raid on that lunch counter. When I give my order watch the waiter run to the door to see how many more scouts there are coming."

Of course, Billy was only joking, for the man at the lunch counter did nothing of the kind. They were able to make a very respectable meal, sitting there on the stools provided for hasty travelers who would possibly bolt a cup of hot coffee, snatch up a sandwich, and hurry out, for fear their train might leave them in the lurch, only to learn they had another fifteen minutes' wait.

When finally even Billy declared he could not eat anything more, they paid their bill and sauntered out of the lunchroom.

"Just a quarter of two," announced Hugh.

"And our train isn't due until thirty-seven after," Billy observed.

"Perhaps we might get some information from the agent about what chance there is of its getting through," suggested the patrol leader.

"I kind of dread to put it to the test," Billy admitted with a shrug of the shoulders. "But I guess the sooner we know the worst the better. Come along, and let's interview the ticket man."

As customary in towns and small cities, the telegraph operator was also the ticket agent; although there were express and station representatives. He seemed to be busily employed taking and receiving messages, and paid not the slightest attention to the two scouts as they came to the window of his booth.

As both Hugh and Billy had studied telegraphy, and were, in fact, pretty clever operators, they soon began to try and read the message as it came clicking over the wires.

The very first words they deciphered gave them a severe shock, and made them doubly eager to catch still more, for they were "bad washouts," "all trains withdrawn until further orders!"

It was a troubled face that Billy turned toward his chum. The agent had left the telegraph instrument, and was hurrying outside, without appearing to notice them. He acted

like a man who had a heavy weight on his mind.

"Did you get that part of the message, Billy?" asked Hugh gravely.

"We're going to be shut up here in Lawrence, seems like, and marooned," answered the other. "Gosh! It does take the cake what queer things happen to you and me, Hugh. Of all the times we might have taken to come over here, we hit on the one great day Lawrence has ever known. Looks like we're in the soup."

"As long as we manage to keep from being in the flood we shouldn't complain, I take it," the patrol leader suggested.

"Where's he's gone to, do you reckon, Hugh?"

"The agent?" queried the second lad. "Outside, to write some sort of notice on the bulletin board where they announce whether trains are on time or not."

"Let's go and see," suggested Billy.

They found that Hugh had hit the right nail on the head when he hazarded that opinion, for the agent was just finishing some sort of notice, using a piece of chalk to write it. Several other people came hurrying over to learn

what it might be, so that the nucleus of a crowd quickly gathered there.

Just as the boys expected, after having picked up the shreds of information from the sounder inside the ticket office, it was an announcement that was destined to add considerable gloom to the already sinking hearts of those who lived in and around Lawrence, the isolated little flood city.

"Owing to serious washouts above and below Lawrence, all train service has had to be abandoned until further notice!"

"That settles it," said Billy, rubbing his chin with thumb and forefinger in a way he had when pondering over anything. "We're in it up to our necks."

"Oh! I hope not—yet," Hugh told him. "You're only going to have that wish you made so recklessly, gratified. After this I'd advise you to think twice before you say things like that, Billy. But here we are, and the only thing that worries me is that the folks at home will be distressed."

"We might get a message through still, if the wires haven't all been carried down with the embankment. Let's make the try, Hugh."

As the suggestion also appealed to the patrol leader, they once more entered the station. Fortunately the agent had not taken it upon himself to shut up shop and go home simply because there would be no more trains along in either direction that day. As long as the wires were working, he would have to stick to his post.

"We are from Oakvale, and would like to get a message through if it could be done," Hugh informed him.

"Wires pretty busy with public business," the agent said. "If you write it out, I'll see what I can do for you. I expect any old time to find that my last connection has broken down; and after that we'll get no news, unless they send it to us by pigeon post or via aëroplane, as all country roads are flooded."

Accordingly Hugh wrote a brief message, telling how they were marooned in the flooded district, and asking that Billy's folks be informed, so that they would not be worried over the non-return of the boys.

"I think I might get that through right now, as there seems to be a little lull in official business," the accommodating agent told them, as

though he liked their faces, and rather sympathized with their predicament of being caught in such a trap so far away from home.

It turned out that fortune was kind to them, for they presently heard him sending Hugh's message. At its conclusion, both lads heaved sighs of satisfaction. They could endure whatever might be in store for them with more grit and a determination not to be dismayed now that they knew the dear ones at home would understand the reason of their not turning up.

After paying for the message and thanking the accommodating agent warmly, Hugh and Billy hastened outside. They realized they were due for new and decidedly interesting experiences; and there was a sort of half-suppressed excitement in the atmosphere of the place that was beginning to affect them.

People were getting more aroused every minute. The report that the trains to the city had all been stopped by serious washouts was being circulated in every direction. The boys could see that it added one more straw to the load that was being placed upon the backs of these Lawrence people.

"Most of them seem to be heading down

toward the river," remarked Billy. "So I propose that we walk that way, too."

He heard no opposition from his chum, because Hugh had just been about to suggest the same thing himself. Puddles of water lay in their path almost everywhere; but these received only scant attention. Beyond lay the river, and that riveted their gaze immediately.

"Holy smoke! look at it swirling along, and as yellow as mud!" exclaimed Billy, who was a bit addicted to slang, though most of his outcroppings along that line were of a harmless character.

"It certainly is on the boom," admitted Hugh. "It's hard to believe that raging torrent can be the same little river that in summertime lazily meanders through this section of country. It's carrying all sorts of flotsam and jetsam along now. See, there goes a chicken-coop; and out further is the trunk of a tree. Everything movable has to take a place in the procession when Mr. Flood comes to town."

"Oh! see the barn coming, will you?" exclaimed Billy. "It can never go under the bridge, Hugh. When it strikes, the old thing

will rattle all to pieces, I guess. Now watch what happens. Say, I think those people on the bridge are taking mighty big chances to stay there so as to see all that goes on. What if—there, now it's going to smash up against the bridge! . . . Oh!"

Even as Billy was saying this in a strained voice, meanwhile clutching the arm of his companion's raincoat in his excitement, they heard a crash; and then the barn, already badly racked by its tribulations while floating on the flood, went to pieces.

Some of the boys who were eagerly observing these happenings gave vent to a cheer, as though they thought it a treat when the unlucky barn ceased to exist, and the fragments floated off on the whirling waters.

"Whee! it looked to me like it might be nip and tuck between the barn and that old bridge," Billy remarked, as he drew a long breath. "Why, Hugh, I could see it quivering to beat the band; and honestly one time I even thought it was going to drop over into the flood!"

"I saw the same thing, Billy," asserted the other boy quickly.

"What made it act that way, Hugh? Looks to me as if it ought to be a pretty strong sort of a bridge, though if the river rises much more, the water'll come level with the flooring, and then it's going to be all up with that structure."

"I'm afraid the water has already weakened the piers, and if that's the case, it is bound to affect the span," Hugh explained. "Whatever can the police of this place be thinking of, allowing foolish people to gather on a shaky bridge like that? It might topple over at any minute, and there would be a whole lot of drownings."

"Hugh, if this was happening over at our town, I warrant you the scouts would have something to say before now about that same thing. Chances are you'd have a bunch of them at work keeping every living soul off the bridge, and guarding the approaches, so if it did go down, no one would be lost. It gives me a cold shiver just to look at all those sillies out there. Not only boys, but girls, and men as well. Why, Hugh, I can see several little tots there that ought to be tied to their moth-

ers' apron strings, instead of being let roam around."

The patrol leader seemed to be just as deeply affected as Billy.

"We are scouts, we must remember, Billy; and it's our duty to save life every time the chance comes to us," he said, very soberly. "We're strangers here in Lawrence, but right now I can see a number of fellows wearing khaki. Suppose we take a notion to round them up and tell them it's their solemn duty to get busy?"

"Hugh, count on me to back you up in anything. By hook or crook, we ought to clear that shaky bridge before some big tree comes floating along to knock it so hard that it'll go down."

Once they had made up their minds to attempt an enterprise, the two chums never "let the grass grow under their feet" until they had done everything in their power toward accomplishing the object they had in view. And when that consisted of trying to save human life, Hugh Hardin was ready to exert himself to the utmost, regardless of his personal sacrifices.

Accordingly he and Billy started to find a couple of the wearers of the khaki suits who would be likely to listen to their bold proposition.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE TOTTERING BRIDGE.

There must have been a couple of hundred people, men, women, and children, watching the raging torrent sweep past. A flood possesses some sort of wonderful fascination over most persons, who will stand and gaze and even shudder, yet be unwilling to turn away.

New things were apt to happen at any time, as the water crept higher and higher, with the worst still to come. Upon the heaving bosom of the raging river, queer floating objects were to be discovered. Loud shouts, for instance, greeted the appearance of a hen-coop with a couple of terrified fowls perched on its roof; and great was the glee of the thoughtless onlookers when, at the crash of this strange craft against the bridge, the chickens with loud squawks flew to safety, and were pursued and caught by some of the younger lads.

"There's our chance, Hugh," remarked Billy Worth, soon after they had agreed to try and

scrape up an acquaintance with several of those who wore the magical khaki of the scouts. "Three of them are jawing away over yonder as if they had some sort of idea they ought to be doing *something,* but couldn't hit on a scheme. The field is ripe for the sowing, Hugh. Get busy with that convincing patter of yours."

They hurried toward the three boys, who, discovering their presence, awaited the coming of the strangers in town with looks of both curiosity and wonder.

"Howdye, fellows," said Hugh, in his pleasant way, at the same time giving the scout salute, which all of the others immediately returned. "My name's Hugh Hardin, and that of my friend is Billy Worth. We're from Oakvale, over here on business, and we find ourselves marooned because all trains have been abandoned until further notice. Please introduce yourselves."

One of the trio of local scouts, who was a tall, thin chap with an odd squint in his eyes, but rather a humorous expression in his face, took it upon himself to do the honors.

"I'm Tipton Lange, commonly called 'Tip.'

This is our bugler, Wash Bradford, who never gets a chance to blow his own horn any more since we've about disbanded the First Lawrence Troop; and this runt is Teddy McQuade. When you say you come from Oakvale, do you mean to tell us you belong to the same troop that has that celebrated Wolf Patrol we've been reading so much about in the papers?"

Billy Worth involuntarily puffed out his already full chest a little more on hearing this remark. So the papers had been printing some of their exploits, had they? Even in far-off Lawrence it was known that Oakvale had the prize troop of the State.

Hugh smiled as he replied to the other's question.

"I never knew before that our patrol had become celebrated, though we certainly have had the good luck to be mixed up in a number of affairs that helped to broaden our knowledge of certain things scouts ought to know. Yes, we are members of that same Wolf Patrol, it happens."

"Hugh Hardin, hey?" exclaimed the boy who had been mentioned as the bugler without a vocation. "Seems to me, Tip, that was the

name of the leader of the Wolf Patrol we read about. Yes, and I remember Billy Worth, too. Say, it's fine to meet you both. And I reckon now you do things over in your town. Shucks! the bottom's dropped out of the scout movement in sleepy old Lawrence."

"Put a new one in, then, why don't you?" said Hugh eagerly.

Somehow his energy seemed to affect the other boys. They exchanged hurried glances, and their faces even lighted up a little with expectancy.

"What might you mean by that, Comrade Hardin?" asked Tip Lange ponderously.

"Wake the town up!" said Hugh. "Show them what scouts can do when they have half a chance. They lost faith in you, I take it, because there may have been jealousy in the ranks, and quarreling. Get together and astonish your people here. Make them sit up and take notice of what you can accomplish. That's what we had to do over our way, to get to the top. And now we have our fifth patrol forming, and Oakvale isn't nearly as big a place as your town."

Tip Lange drew a long breath, and sighed dismally as he shook his head.

"It's nice of you to tell us that, Hardin, and goodness knows we'd like to carry out the idea, but you don't understand how dead a place Lawrence is these days. Every effort we made to hold an exhibition turned out a failure. It begins to look as if this was no scout town. The boys have lost all heart. I'm nearly ready to throw up the sponge myself."

"Yep, that's what ails us fellows; we haven't got the opportunity to distinguish ourselves that you Wolf Patrol boys ran across," grumbled Wash Bradford.

"No opportunity!" cried Billy Worth. "Oh! my stars. Take the scales off your eyes, fellows!"

"No opportunity!" echoed Hugh, amazed at the explanation that had been given to account for the lack of an organization in Lawrence. "Why, I never ran across such a splendid opening for scouts to make themselves useful as there is right at this very minute. With your town threatened by the most terrible flood ever known, don't you see that you can do dozens of things to help people in trouble? No oppor-

tunity, when foolish crowds line a quivering bridge that is likely to go down if a floating tree crashes against it like that barn did. Oh! if only you'd let us join in with you, we'd *find things* to do that would make your folks sit up and take notice."

"And from this day on they would cheer a scout every time they saw one on the street in his khaki suit," added Billy, with enthusiasm.

The three local boys had stood there and stared as Hugh poured out his words. His manner was so vehement that they must have been thrilled through and through. First of all they turned and looked at each other; then the expression of amazement on their faces began to give way to growing interest that quickly ripened into what began to approach enthusiasm.

"Wash, Teddy, what say? Sounds good to me, I tell you! These fellows have got the right kind of notion. Let's wake Lawrence up; let's show these people what a scout is worth when he really tries! Say, Hugh Hardin, and you, too, Billy Worth, we'll back you up in anything you've a mind to try; and here's my hand on it, too."

The feeling of exaltation grew by bounds, it seemed. Both Wash and Teddy followed the example set by Tip Lange in squeezing the hands of the boys from Oakvale.

"Good for you!" said Hugh. "We'll see what we can do to help you out. And first of all we ought to find some way to clear that crowd off the bridge. Some of them are reckless, and others don't seem to realize the danger they're in. Let's start in by acting as though we've had orders from your Chief of Police, who ought to be here on the spot, but isn't. Don't let a solitary one stay; and tell them all there's danger of the bridge going out at any minute."

"Bully idea!" exclaimed Wash Bradford. "Let's keep together, so we can crowd off any who want to put up a kick and stay. Tell us what to do, Hugh, and we'll be only too glad to carry it out. I'm tickled to death at the idea of somebody coming to town who's got some sense and snap about him."

"Wish we could coax you to stay with us till we got the old crowd started up again, that's right!" said Teddy McQuade, with sincere admiration in his manner.

The five of them started toward the approach of the bridge.

"There's Wallie Cramer on the bridge; he's one of our bunch, too. Shall I pull him along with us, Hugh?" remarked Tip Lange, as they drew near the structure.

"The more scouts you can get together, the better," admitted the patrol leader.

" 'In union there is strength!' " quoted Billy wisely.

They pushed along the bridge, and were thrilled to find that it did actually tremble from time to time. Hugh also noticed that there was a slight swaying movement that was dreadfully suggestive.

"We can't clear this old death trap any too soon, it strikes me," stammered Teddy McQuade, "and I never was much of a swimmer anyhow."

"That wouldn't bother you any if so be you went over into that soup," declared Wash Bradford, who himself looked a trifle "white about the gills," as Billy would have expressed it, when gazing down at the foaming flood that swept just under the flooring of the bridge used

for vehicles and foot passengers, and which was much lower than the railroad span.

Meanwhile Tip Lange had been hurriedly speaking with the fourth scout whom he called Wallie Cramer. Hugh rather liked his looks. He believed that once he understood what they had in view this new addition to their number was likely to prove a valuable ally. He seemed to have the appearance of a fellow possessed of nerve and "get there" qualities.

Apparently whatever Tip Lange told him in that minute of time must have aroused Wally considerably; for he turned on the two Oakvale scouts and held out his hand to them without the formality of an introduction.

"Count on me to back you up, fellows," was what Wally Cramer said. "I was just thinking myself that we were silly to take chances on this tottering old bridge. People can be such fools. Shall we start yelling that it's going to go out, and scare the bunch half to death? Any old thing ought to pass, so long as we accomplish our object. The end and not the means is what counts."

"That's pretty straight," said Hugh, "but we'll try to shoo them off first. If they won't

go in that way we might try the scare racket. Just as you say, some people have to be saved against their will."

So the six boys in khaki continued on toward the opposite end of the bridge until they had passed the last spectator. A number gave them an idle look as if wondering who the two strange boys in khaki might be, since they did not recognize them as belonging to Lawrence.

"Now, close up, and form a solid line across the bridge!" called out Hugh, for the roar of the water whirling about the abutments sounded so loud that it was next to impossible to hear anything spoken in an ordinary tone.

Some of those who were enjoying the thrilling sight of the dizzy flood passing under the flooring of the bridge, on finding that they were being forced to vacate did so good-naturedly. Especially was this the case when they heard some of the scouts saying that the police had ordered the bridge vacated because it was liable to be carried away at any minute. Possibly these parties awakened to the risk they had been running, and doubtless would have continued to run only for the fact of the

line of scouts grimly clearing the roadway, and allowing no one to remain.

Now and then some one grumbled and even threatened. At such times Hugh pushed up and gave the man, or boy, as the case might be, to understand that unless he complied with the order, an arrest would swiftly follow.

The concealed threat answered every time. Even a pugnacious fellow who had long been known as the bully of Lawrence, as Hugh afterward learned, on looking straight into that calm yet determined face of Hugh Hardin finally gave his head a little sneering flirt, and as he shuffled along was heard to mutter:

"Guess you ain't no Lawrence scout, young feller. They ain't built like you. But it's so, an' the old bridge *is* gettin' mighty shaky. I'm a-goin' because I want to, an' not on 'count of bein' told to skip out, see?"

Hugh was perfectly satisfied. Little he cared why people abandoned the dangerous span so long as they did do it. And when he reached the near side with his little company, and looking back could see that not a single man, woman, or child remained on the bridge,

he felt that for once the scouts of Lawrence had accomplished something worth while.

"Now we must stand guard here, so as to keep it clear!" was what Hugh said to his little band, as they gathered in a group, the Lawrence fellows looking exceedingly proud, as though conscious of having done something worth while at last.

Hardly had they taken up their positions than the same town bully whom they had influenced to leave the threatened span, shoved up in front of Tip Lange.

"Hold on there, you can't go back on the bridge, Tug Wilson!" the scout told him, as he blocked the way.

"Hang the luck, I tell ye I dropped my belt out there, an' I jest got to git it. Step aside, Tip Lange, an' let me pass!" the big overgrown bully said.

"Nobody is to be allowed to go on the bridge again, Tug!" urged the Lange boy.

At that the bully, not accustomed to having his actions questioned, and by a town boy at that, thrust Tip aside with half an effort, and in another instant was seen hurrying along the bridge. He even turned, and, looking back,

put out his tongue in a fashion that spoke louder than words could have done concerning his feelings.

Billy Worth, always impulsive, was for dashing after him, and attempting to accomplish by force what words had failed to do.

"Come on, Tip. We'll get him, all right!" he called out, when a hand was clapped on his shoulder and Hugh shouted in his ear:

"Don't be foolish, Billy! If he chooses to take the chances that's no reason you should follow suit. He may never come back again. Look, there is the floating tree coming down with a rush that we feared might strike the bridge and send it over!"

Billy stood in his tracks as though frozen. He realized in that instant how once more his impetuous nature had come close to getting him into a peck of trouble, as had happened on numerous past occasions.

Yes, there was a huge tree floating in the midst of a mass of wreckage, the whole making a terrible ram that, if brought suddenly against the already weakened bridge, must complete its downfall. And, apparently unaware of his danger, Tug Wilson was sauntering carelessly

across the span, conscious only of the fact that hundreds of eyes must be centered on him just then.

Voices began to roar out at him. They were sending all sorts of warnings; but it might be that the boy took it for granted these were cheers because of the nerve he was exhibiting; for he never gave a single glance up-river way to where that monster floating tree and its attendant mass of wreckage was bearing down toward the tottering span of the bridge, with the force of a great battering ram.

CHAPTER IV.

AN HONOR TO THE WOLF PATROL.

"He's crazy!"

"That'll be the last of Tug Wilson!"

"Got just about one chance in three to skip back!"

These were some of the exclamations that broke from the boys whom energetic Hugh Hardin had gathered around him at the approach to the doomed bridge. Those fellows saw what a foolhardy thing it was the big bully of Lawrence had attempted.

The fact of the matter was that Tug had so long been accustomed to having his way through force that he could not brook opposition. He had been furious at himself for having yielded to the demands of these silly scouts while on the threatened structure; and tempted to defy their authority.

The sudden discovery connected with the loss of his belt had given him a cue; and with the result that he was now out there on the bridge,

making his way toward the spot where he could see the object of his search lying on the planks.

Tug Wilson did not often find himself in the spotlight. Public opinion in Lawrence had almost invariably been heavily against him, because he was on the wrong side of every undertaking.

And so, when he realized that all those shouts and half cheers were intended for him, the boy became more reckless than ever. Instead of making as much haste as possible out to his belt, snatching the article up, and sprinting back to safety, he even slackened his pace.

That noisy applause was sweet music to his ears. He wanted to stretch it out just as long as he could. Measuring the distance the approaching floating tree had still to cover, Tug believed he would have time to accomplish his errand and even seconds to spare.

He meant to show those weak-kneed Boy Scouts that there were others who did not know the meaning of the word fear, even though they might not wear khaki suits, and boast of medals and badges galore.

"Hurry, Tug!"

"You've got to run, and run fast, old boy!"

Those were possibly some of his boon companions shouting at the top of their voices to him. Tug heard and took notice. He realized that they were genuinely alarmed for his safety. That would mean he might be risking too much; and so Tug did start to running at last.

Most of those who stood ten deep on the shore only knew the boy as a town nuisance, who had given them a great deal of trouble in times past; still just then they were forced to feel more or less admiration for his reckless daring. And so they shouted encouragement, as though they wanted to see him carry his desperate and foolhardy venture through to a successful termination.

The drifting mass was now very near. Many an anxious eye turned toward it, and mental calculations that were made gave the boy but scant time to return to safety before the crash must come.

Tug reached the spot where his belt lay. He made out to snatch it up, but, in his haste, managed to drop it again. Of course that only necessitated another movement, but it broke into the even tenor of his way.

Besides that, in thus bending he seemed to gauge the coming danger at a more acute angle than at any previous time. Hugh judged that something warned Tug he might have made a slight miscalculation that would cost him dear unless he mended his ways and increased his pace.

"Now he's on the jump!"

"Go it, Tug; you've got to hump yourself, old man!"

They were shouting at him again, but if Tug heard he gave no evidence of the fact. He was keeping one eye turned toward the threatening danger, which was in truth the worst thing he could have done, as Hugh might have warned him, if given the chance.

Tug was running faster, probably, than he had ever done before in all his adventurous life. On previous occasions it may have been some angry farmer who was in pursuit of him as a trespasser, but now he was racing with death itself.

The realization of his foolishness must have pierced his heart, for, despite the violent exertions he was making, Hugh could see that his face was very white.

Hugh himself had taken several paces along the planks of the approach to the bridge. If any of his companions noticed the action at all, which is doubtful, as their attention was riveted on the running Tug, they could hardly have guessed what was passing through the mind of the patrol leader.

Suddenly a concerted groan burst from many lips. No cheer captain at a struggle on the gridiron between rival college teams could ever have produced such a concentrated expression of dismay.

What Hugh had been fearing had actually happened. Tug, foolishly dividing his attention between what lay before him and that oncoming mass of wreckage, had stubbed his toe on some projecting plank and been thrown heavily forward.

They heard the crash of his fall. There was a second or two given up to watching for him to scramble to his feet and continue his mad race. Then came another loud groan from the now awed crowd.

Tug never moved. He must have struck his head in falling and lost his senses. Apparently he was now doomed, if, as seemed probable,

the mass of floating material about to come into collision with the weakened span carried the bridge down with it.

Then a faint cheer broke forth. It gathered headway, halted again, and after that kept on increasing until it seemed to dominate every other sound.

Billy Worth knew what had happened, for he had seen Hugh leave the spot he had been occupying. Like an arrow from the bow Hugh ran forward, his one design being to seize upon the senseless Tug, and in some way drag or carry him to safety before the bridge fell.

There was a gallant object in this bold attempt—that of saving life—whereas with Tug it had only been entered into so as to indulge in his willfulness and display contempt for authority of all kinds.

Billy held his breath. He was never so frightened in all his life. At first he was tempted to chase after Hugh, but the realization that he could give his chum no assistance whatever, chained him to the spot.

Now the cheering had ceased. Everyone seemed to be stricken with the same realization that it was ill-timed, and might serve to dis-

tract the attention of the intended rescuer. So it happens that in a desperately fought game on the diamond, or the football field, the mass of spectators will swing from loud acclaim to utter silence as if by magic.

They saw Hugh pick up the heavy figure of the senseless Tug. Why, the boy must be wonderfully strong to do that, or else given unnatural powers when facing such a desperate condition, the crowd probably thought.

Few of those who looked on believed the brave scout could ever get back in time to avert a catastrophe. Perhaps those who hoped for the best were pinning their faith to the fact that as yet it was not absolutely positive that the bridge would yield to the pressure of the impending collision.

It actually looked as though some unseen power had thrust out a hand to give Hugh the few additional seconds he required in order to make good. Some snag, that might have been a tree-trunk standing upright in the water, caught the oncoming mass and held it suspended for just a brief space of time. Then it overcame the obstacle to its progress and started once more toward the bridge.

That short truce was enough. It enabled Hugh to drag his burden to where eager hands seized upon them both. Thus they were drawn from the approach to the bridge, with every spectator shrieking his or her approval.

And, while this tumult was going on, the floating tree and its attendant mass of wreckage was seen to come against the middle of the endangered span. The entire fabric trembled, and gave way. There was a crash that thrilled every heart, a stupendous shudder, as of keen regret over parting from old and valued friends, and with that the bridge vanished into the maw of the flood.

Where it had stood now lay a horrid gap. Fragments projected from the opposite shore, telling where the bridge had once been anchored. And floating down-stream on the yellow torrents, were parts of the structure, intermingled with the wreckage that had been the means of its dissolution.

Hugh had sank to the ground out of breath as soon as he realized that he was safely off the endangered structure. Some of the scouts bore Tug Wilson away to the nearest house. The

boy had had a close call, and everybody was talking about it.

"Who was that young chap?"

"He was a scout, you could see!"

"Must have been a stranger in Lawrence, then, because I know all our boys, and it wasn't one of them!"

"The bravest thing I ever saw done, barring none!"

"He ought to get a silver medal for that, sure thing!"

Could Hugh have heard these and many other remarks that passed from mouth to mouth among the people on the river bank, he would have blushed with embarrassment. But Hugh was not giving one thought to anything of the sort. He had managed to recover his breath, and was once more on the move. This incident of the stricken bridge was now a thing of the past, and should not engage their attention any further. The present and the future had to be looked after; in other words, the "mill will never grind again with the water that is past."

Hugh found that a great change had taken place in the scouts of Lawrence. They were

now wide-awake and enthusiastic. Those shouts of acclaim had acted like magic to arouse them. All that was necessary now was for someone to tell them what to do; they needed a leader, and every boy would be found willing and eager to do his level best for the good of the stricken people of the flooded town and vicinity.

"What next, Hugh?"

"Show us something you think we ought to tackle!"

"We're ready for any old job, it doesn't matter how hard. We're going to show the Lawrence people that scouts amount to something, after all!"

"Hurrah! you just bet we are, fellows!"

Hugh allowed this enthusiasm to grow spontaneously for a bit. He knew it would assume additional strength, if not nipped too soon. When he considered that the right time had arrived to strike he gathered the little knot of boys about him.

"Then the first thing to be done," was what Hugh said, "is to get as many scouts together as we can. Scatter around the town, and wherever you can lay hold of a fellow who be-

longs to your crowd, fetch him here. We'll need all we can get to try out the many things there are waiting for us to tackle. Will you do this, fellows?"

They would have promised him anything just then, for Hugh had taken the entire lot by storm. They greatly admired the way in which he had dashed out to save the foolish Tug Wilson, who was accounted the worst boy in town; and Hugh had been aware of that fact at the time, which in itself impressed Tip and Wash and the other local scouts as all the more remarkable.

So there was an immediate scattering, and the only one left alongside Hugh was his faithful chum, Billy Worth. That worthy was surveying Hugh earnestly, and nodding his head again and again in approval, as he muttered to himself:

"I just knew it would happen that way. I knew it would be the luckiest day Lawrence ever saw when *you* struck town, Hugh Hardin. And, my word for it, they'll never forget the handsome way you yanked that loafer of a Tug Wilson off that bridge. Once more the honors go to the good old Wolf Patrol, to which I'm proud to say I, too, belong!"

CHAPTER V.

SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE.

While waiting there for the return of the envoys sent out to drum up recruits for the rescue squad, Hugh noticed that there was considerable excitement down at the edge of the water.

"Let's see what's doing over yonder, Billy," he remarked.

"I was watching that bunch," the other scout replied. "As near as I can tell, they're marking the stage of the water. If only the river got stationary, or began to fall, it'd mean a whole lot to the people of Lawrence, not to mention all the farmers up the valley Tip was telling us about."

"It must look pretty blue, then," observed Hugh, as they advanced toward the spot, "because nobody seems to want to give even a whisper of a cheer."

When they pushed into the crowd they found that an old inhabitant had taken it upon him-

self to keep "tabs" of the rise of the waters. Perhaps this had been a hobby of the old fellow's for years, and he was looked on as a sort of authority when any reference was made to past floods.

Some of the people must have recognized in Hugh the boy who had so lately performed that gallant act. They nudged one another, and exchanged low remarks.

"He looks like a brave one, sure enough. Just the sort of chap to carry out a rescue. I'd warrant you now that he's done the same several times—snatching boys out of holes in the ice, or getting them ashore when they've been taken with cramps in swimming!"

"And they say it was him started the movement to chase everybody off the bridge. Only for that there might have been some gone down with it!"

"I asked Tip Lange who he was, and he said it was a boy named Hugh Hardy, or something like that, from over in Oakvale."

"It would be a good thing for Lawrence if he came here to live. I never felt so much like kissing a boy in all my life as when I saw him drag that foolish Tug Wilson off the

dreadful bridge. I only wish my nephew was built like that brave boy."

It was perhaps fortunate that Hugh did not hear the old maid say this, or even catch the remarks exchanged between the others. He had managed to reach the side of the white-haired old man who was bending over a marked stick which he had fastened to a post that stood deep in the yellow water.

"What do the marks show, sir?" asked Hugh.

The old man glanced up at him. Perhaps he, too, suspected that this manly looking young chap in the khaki suit and with the raincoat over his arm was the same boy who had so recently performed that gallant deed. At any rate he replied without the least hesitation:

"Now a foot and two inches above the highest record made in forty years. I know, because I've been keeping tally that long."

"But how fast is it rising now?" continued Hugh.

"At a terribly rapid pace, I am sorry to tell you. In the last hour it has come up almost a foot. There will be great woe and desola-

tion all through the valley. I feel sorry for the people living further away from Lawrence. It is bad enough here; but we are a community, and no one need suffer while others are able to lend a helping hand. But the isolated farmers and the little hamlets will be in desperate straits."

It did the old veteran's heart credit, this concern for others. Hugh, too, was thinking of those who had no one to lean upon. He wished some means could be found whereby he could start out on the flood that ran for many miles back up the valley, so as to rescue those helpless ones caught in the sea of raging waters.

Once again he and Billy went back to the place where they had promised to wait for the coming of the local scouts. All the while Hugh's active brain was trying to lay plans, although until he knew just what the nature of their resources might be it was next to impossible to settle on these definitely.

"There comes Tip!" exclaimed Billy, who had evidently been keeping a watchful lookout all the while.

"And he's got two others with him, I notice,"

added the patrol leader. "Strikes me we haven't run across either of them before, Billy."

"They're new ones to me, all right, which shows that Tip is all to the good, and has done his part. If the rest can double up, we'll have a fair-sized bunch to hustle things some."

Tip pushed toward them. He must have been telling his companions a lot about Hugh as they came along, for the eyes of the two boys were glued upon the stranger continually, and they shook hands at being hurriedly introduced as though proud of the privilege of knowing this energetic comrade from another town.

"There's Wash coming, and he's got the Smith twins with him, all right!" Tip remarked immediately afterward. "That means four recruits, and more to hear from. We ought to scare up some sixteen or twenty fellows, I should think. Used to have more'n three full patrols in this old town; but things got so bad there were only seven at the last meeting, and some of them even said they'd be hanged if they'd bother coming out to such a dull affair again."

Others of the local scouts now began to heave in sight. Those who had started forth with the intention of rounding up others had certainly exerted themselves to the limit; for there was hardly a single fellow who failed to bring back one new addition to the rescue squad.

They had managed to enthuse the others to a considerable extent, too, in some way or other. Possibly that thrilling event of the bridge had served them all for the purpose.

When Tip announced that the last scout who had been sent out was now back, and that they had their full quota on deck, Hugh counted noses.

"Seventeen of us, all told, fellows!" he declared. "It strikes me that ought to be enough to do a heap of work. Over in Oakvale we've managed to get there when we couldn't count on more than half this number to do things. It depends pretty much on the vim you put into your labor."

"Tell us what we ought to tackle first, and then see us dig!" one of the newer arrivals called out.

The spirit was spreading fast, just as a trace

of yeast placed in a lump of dough soon impregnates the entire batch. Those boys who helped Hugh and Billy clear the bridge realized how sweet it was to be possessed of a little authority. Somehow, people had seemed to respect them, possibly for the first time. And then that brave act of Hugh Hardin had won such golden opinions from the citizens that it was hoped they would cover the whole scout movement as with a blanket.

"I want to tell you, fellows," Hugh continued impressively, "there's going to be a plenty to do for all of us—perhaps much more than we can manage—before this flood goes down again. You've got a glorious chance to make good. There never was such a splendid one for any scouts that I ever heard about. It's up to you to take advantage of it; and if you seize the opportunity you can depend on it, after it's all over, scout reputation will have soared to top notch in Lawrence."

"Hurrah!"

"Good for you, Hugh! That's the stuff we want to hear!"

"They'll be taking off their hats to you, fellows," Hugh told them in his impressive way,

"and there isn't anything within reason you might ask for but what the people of this burg would give it to you!

"Our chance has surely come, boys! Let's be like the busy little bee, and improve each shining hour, only there's nothing shining under that dark sky."

"Would you mind if I said a few words to our fellows, Hugh?" asked Tip Lange, who, although he had not mentioned the fact to his new-found friends, must have been in some position of authority in the now nearly defunct Boy Scout Troop of Lawrence.

"Talk as much as you want to, Tip," replied the other, "only we must organize our work on a systematic basis soon."

Thereupon Tip waved his arms until all the fellows had clustered around him. He had stepped on a box that happened to be lying nearby. It looked as though some labor agitator might be about to "spout," and try to get the honest workers to go out on a strike.

"Boys," began Tip, in his most impressive tone, "this comrade from Oakvale has had a heap of experience in building up a scout troop. Some of us have read about what they've done over in his town, and let me tell you it all re-

flects great credit on Hugh Hardin, assistant scout master."

"Hear! hear!"

"Good for you, Tip; he sure deserves all that and more."

"Keep still and let Tip do the talking; he's got something he wants to tell us, don't you understand?"

Again Tip started in after these remarks had ceased.

"It's a bit of good fortune that brought Hugh Hardin and his chum Billy Worth to Lawrence just at this time. Only for what he did at the bridge there might have been a considerable loss of life, for some of those fools would have stayed out there till it was too late to get off. That's a fair sample of the way Hugh Hardin does things. And, fellows, we want him to show us how. You can't see his wings, but all the same I reckon that he's the good angel that's been sent here to help us out of the pit we've been wallowin' in so long."

Some of the boys must have considered that Tip was waxing eloquent in delivering this harangue, for they insisted on giving him a hearty cheer. When the noise had again sub-

sided, the orator continued, evidently fully in sympathy with his subject, because he had taken a violent liking for Hugh.

"Now, I want you to make me a promise, fellows," continued Tip. "It's only right and fair that if Hugh stands by us and does all he can to land the Lawrence Troop back in the place it once occupied that we ought to carry out his orders as unhesitatingly as if he were at the head of our troop. Isn't that right?"

The answer was unanimous, and given with a roar of approval that left no doubt in Hugh's mind about the ability of these Lawrence scouts to attain their goal if once they could be given a fair start.

"All right," said Tip. "That sounds good to me. Now, every fellow who faithfully promises to look up to Hugh Hardin as our temporary scout master, and to obey his commands as such, upon his honor as a scout, raise his right hand!"

He looked around, and seemingly counted the hands that went aloft.

"Fourteen, which, with my own, covers every Lawrence scout present. That makes it unanimous. I therefore introduce Hugh Har-

din to the boys of this town as the temporary scout master of the troop. And now, Hugh, you take things in hand. No yelling, fellows; we've got too serious business in hand to waste our breath that way. Set your jaws together like you meant to ride roughshod over every obstacle. That's the way things are done, I take it."

Hugh was entirely satisfied. All preliminaries having now been arranged, he felt that they could "get down to brass tacks," as Billy called it, without further delay.

"I've noticed, to begin with," he remarked to the eager scouts who clustered around him, that the lower part of the town is already being submerged. There are poor people there who will lose everything unless some one helps them ferry their bedding and clothes and such things as the water would run to higher ground. Now, I'm going to lay you all off in batches so you can work better in company."

He thereupon picked out three boys who were to be in charge of Wash Bradford, and another lot whom Teddy McQuade would boss.

"Get hold of any rowboats you can," Hugh told them. "If that's impossible make a strong

raft that can be pushed with poles. Then go down in the part of town that is under water and do all you can to rescue people and save their stuff for them. In that way there will be many to look upon the garb of a scout as a badge of honor, and always to be considered a mark for their respect. And keep working as long as you can stand it. There'll be plenty for all of us to do, never fear."

That took about half of their number, or eight in all. The two detachments hurried away, conferring as to the best means for carrying out the part of Hugh's scheme entrusted to their charge.

One of the parties managed to get hold of a large rowboat in some fashion. It may have leaked to some extent, but scouts would know how to make temporary repairs, and with this boat they were in a position to move around and do considerable in the way of helping those who had been caught by the rising waters in the homes they had hesitated about deserting to the mercy of the flood.

The other boys were compelled to resort to a raft; but Teddy McQuade proved to be a clever manager, once his energies had been

fully aroused; and he remembered where there would be plenty of just the kind of pine boards they would need for a dandy raft. Nails and a hatchet were procured, also some stout clothes lines to serve as a check should the current prove too strong for their clumsy means of passage along the main street that was now five feet deep in water.

Of course, Hugh did not intend to waste any time in seeing how these two detachments carried out their orders. He had other work to do. There were still nine of them remaining. These he divided up into three groups consisting of the same number of members. Tip Lange and Billy he kept along with him; for he had a plan in his mind that he meant to try and put into execution later on.

When the other six had also been dispatched to start on the work of accomplishing such things as they could find to do for the unfortunates, Hugh turned to Tip.

"How about that boat you said you could get for us, Tip?"

"Come right along, and I'll try and make good. I had a ride on the same only last summer, and if only we c'n get the owner's consent

to loan her to us, we ought to be able to do a heap of rescue work. He's some cranky, though, and mightn't just like to let three boys handle the launch."

"Hello! that sounds cheery to me!" exclaimed Billy, who had not known anything about this before. "A motorboat would be able to get around in this flood all right, I should think, provided it kept away from that nasty current of the river. Lead us to the man who owns such a craft. That's kind of you, Tip."

The Lawrence boy hurried away, with his two new friends tagging at his heels. Dodging in and out of the crowds that were hastening this way and that, all terribly excited and wrought up by the prospects of the flood taking a fearful toll of property if not human lives, they came after a while to where a cottage stood, with its grounds running down toward the river.

"There's the boathouse, yonder," called Tip over his shoulder. "Mr. Sperry was smart enough to have it a floating one, so all he has to do now is to keep changing the ropes that hold it."

"I hear some one working with the engine of the launch, seems to me," remarked Billy, whose hearing was very acute when he was excited and anxious.

"Yes, but I just glimpsed Mr. Sperry himself looking out of the window," said Tip Lange, as if to explain why he did not intend to alter their course and head toward the floating boathouse. "He's a lame man, and can't get around much afoot, so he has an automobile and a launch to take him. Come along in with me, fellows."

There was indeed a mud-splashed motorcar at the gate as the three lads passed through.

"That's his runabout," commented Tip. "Like's not he's been down where the crowd gathered to hear the latest news. I wonder, now, if he saw the bridge go out, and how you got Tug Wilson safe ashore, Hugh."

He had hardly knocked on the door when it was opened. Mr. Sperry was a man with a red beard, and walked with a crutch and a cane. Hugh remembered having seen him in the crowd; for that useful training as a scout to notice things and impress them on his memory, whether they seemed worth while or not

at the time, was serving the boy another good turn.

Tip quickly announced the reason for their hurried call. He introduced his two companions, and the lame man's eye kindled as he looked at Hugh.

"Why, to be sure, I'd like to do anything I could to accommodate so brave a lad," he said breezily, as he laid a hand affectionately on Hugh's shoulder. "I saw what you did down at the bridge; and the people of Lawrence have good reason to be glad you happened to be marooned here. But about my boat, I'm sorry to disappoint you. I've already promised it to my nephew who's visiting us; he was sick abed, but insisted on getting out to do something. He's down there at the boathouse now. You might ask him to let you go along."

This was a bitter disappointment. Still, it might be worse, and the three boys started in the direction of the boathouse, Billy muttering as he went:

"Playing second fiddle isn't according to my liking, as a rule; but we'll see what we'll see. Mebbe we might coax him to give up the ship, or else toss him overboard!"

CHAPTER VI.

A LUCKY MEETING.

"Do you know this nephew of Mr. Sperry, and is he a decent sort of fellow?" asked Hugh of Tip Lange, as the three of them started down the slope toward where the floating boathouse was moored to a tree, having long since been pushed far back of its original landing.

"Never knew he had a nephew," replied the other over his shoulder. "I reckon he must have come from some other town, and is only visiting here. But he would be a poor sport if he wouldn't ask us to get aboard and help out. Come on, we'll soon know what's what!"

They pushed in through the open door of the boathouse. The first thing Billy saw was that the boy bending over, doing some oiling apparently to the engine of the launch, wore a faded suit of khaki. He felt like giving a cheer, his sense of relief was so great. Instead he simply clutched Hugh by the arm and pointed.

Hugh nodded his head. They could not see the boy's face, but the sight of that uniform was certainly pleasant to the patrol leader. He seemed to feel a sudden surety that the one who wore it must have subscribed to the rules by which all scouts are governed, and if so he could not well refuse to accept them as comrades in arms.

Tip Lange coughed loudly, which, of course, was intended to let Mr. Sperry's nephew know of their presence. At that the stooping boy raised his head to look.

Hugh could hardly believe his eyes. As for Billy Worth, he let out a wild whoop.

"Why, what's this?" he cried. "It sure looks like our chum, Monkey Stallings. Hey! are you Mr. Sperry's nephew? Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch!"

The boy whom Billy called by such a queer name, and who also answered to that of Eben when at home or in school, was in fact an Oakvale scout, and a member of the Fox Patrol. He had only been in Oakvale a comparatively short time, but being full of enthusiasm had managed to work his way up to the grade of a second-class scout.

He came by his absurd title honestly enough; indeed his comrades could not have dubbed him by any fairer nickname than that of "Monkey," for he was a regular athlete, and could do all manner of wonderful stunts, from turning flip-flops to hanging by his toes from the limbs of trees, walking a tight rope, and in fact everything that a circus star of the sawdust ring could do.

"What! you here in Lawrence, Hugh; and Billy, too?" he burst out, apparently as much astonished at seeing them as they had felt at sight of him.

"I came here on some business with a lawyer for my folks, and Billy wanted to keep me company," explained Hugh. "When the trains were abandoned we found we had to stay over, so here we are. But I had no idea you had left Oakvale, Monkey."

"I only had time to catch the train after my ma asked me to come up and visit Uncle Henry for the Easter holidays, as he always thought a heap of me when we all used to live up in Maine. Then, hang the luck! I hardly got here before I ate something that doubled me up like a jackknife, and I've been sick ever

since. But when he came back a little while ago and told me how terrible things were getting, I made up my mind I was going to take the launch out and see if I couldn't help some poor folks save their stuff."

"That's just what brought us here," declared Tip Lange, who had witnessed this meeting of chums with evident delight, since it smoothed away all their difficulties like magic.

"And we're going off with you to assist in the good work, hear that, Monkey?" asserted Billy, with the manner of a dictator who would not take no for an answer.

"Sure thing!" sang out the Stallings boy, with a happy grin. "Say, having our assistant scout master along is going to take a load of responsibility off my poor shoulders, don't you forget it."

"How is the engine?" asked Hugh, without noticing the compliment, although Tip Lange looked toward Billy and nodded his head as much as to say: "I see he's held in just as high esteem at home as he will be here in Lawrence, when people stop to think of all he's done for the place."

"Seems to be in apple-pie shape," replied Monkey Stallings promptly. "I was just giving her a little more oil when you came. Uncle keeps her up to the scratch all the time. He'd make a good scout, because he's so particular about doing things the very best he knows how. But say, what about this he was telling me of some stranger in town who wore scout duds snatching a boy off the bridge when it was just in the act of being swept away by a driftwood pack!"

Billy chuckled aloud.

"Can't you guess, Monkey?" he demanded, with a knowing wink.

At that the Stallings boy gave a shout.

"Then it was some of Hugh's work, was it?" he exclaimed. "I might have guessed as much. I thought it smacked of the Wolf Patrol way. Some other time you've got to tell me all about it, Billy, won't you?"

"I promise you, Monkey," replied the other, as he clambered aboard the launch, and then looking about him continued: "Seems to me this boat ought to hold quite a raft of people if pushed. It's the boss thing for the work we're going to start out on now."

"Uncle says it has held twenty by crowding," Stallings assured him.

Meanwhile Hugh was busy at the engine. In addition to numerous other qualifications that made him a good scout with a wide range of information, Hugh possessed a practical knowledge of motors that had proved of considerable value to him on many occasions.

After a little examination of the one which he now expected to handle, he soon had it throbbing noisily. When the moorings were cast off they ran easily out of the boathouse and upon the broad expanse of water.

The flood was constantly widening its sweep as it sought out new places for invasion. There was a perceptible current nearly everywhere, though, of course, it was fiercest in the original river bed, where the sweeping waters met with no obstructions to their progress, now that the passenger bridge had been carried off.

Hugh immediately turned toward the lower part of the town. They could see some people along the shore waving to them and shouting, but what they said none of those aboard the motorboat understood, nor could they take the time to try and find out.

Hugh was very careful how he steered his boat, for there were snags to be met with, and should they strike one while going at such speed, it might prove the finish of the *Idler,* as the boat was named.

They could see that there was a considerable bustle about this section of the town. The poor folks living here were doing all in their limited power to save some of their scanty but nevertheless precious belongings. They were wading hip deep in the cold water in some cases, bearing beds, clothes, and one even had a small cook stove thus elevated.

Others were trying to make excuses for rafts out of any stray pieces of lumber they could get their hands on. In most cases these were so flimsily patched together that there was a strong likelihood of their parting as soon as any sort of a load had been placed on them.

"Yap-yap-yap!"

"Hello! that sounds like the Otter signal!" exclaimed Billy Worth, pricking up his ears; "I've heard Alec Sands and Buck Winter give it many a time. But we're in Lawrence, not Oakvale, it happens."

"But they may have had an Otter Patrol in

their troop; how about that, Tip?" remarked Hugh, still guiding the launch with the dexterous hand of a born pilot, and at the same time keeping one eye on the throbbing motor.

"To be sure we have, and Wash Bradford is the leader of the Otters," came the prompt reply. "There's a boat right now; and yes, that's Wash himself loading it with some household stuff the others are passing out of that window to him."

"He's beckoning to us," said Stallings. "You can work in closer to them, can't you, Hugh? It might be he wants to put us wise to something of importance."

"No trouble getting there with this boat, if only there's enough water," the steersman answered, with a confidence that he believed was not going to be misplaced. "Billy, you're up in the bow, so suppose you take that pole and keep finding what the depth is. Sing out to me as often as you dip."

"But gee whittaker, Hugh! I don't know what a fathom is," protested Billy, although he did snatch up the push pole indicated, and commenced dipping it straight down.

"Then go by feet, so long as you tell me of any shoaling," explained Hugh.

"Three feet, then. Now two and three-quarters. Going at two and three-quarters. Two and a half! Are you all done? Oh! Two and a quarter, and sold to the gentleman over there. How's this, Hugh?"

"We're in close enough, and I'll try to hold her here against the current while Tip has a confab with his comrade," announced the pilot, who wished to let the local boys have all the say possible in the management of things, so that they might feel the responsibility that rested on their shoulders, and at the same time reap the full reward that was to come.

"What is it, Wash?" asked Tip, flushing with pleasure when he heard Hugh designate him as the one to do the talking, when some fellows would have monopolized all rights to that themselves; and it increased his respect for the visiting comrade more than ever.

"We're getting on hunky-dory here, Tip," replied the leader of the boat party, as he took a package of bed clothes from one of the other scouts who appeared at the open window just then and deposited it in the stern of the craft,

where a woman and three children were huddled, looking the picture of despair.

"Then you didn't want any help, I take it?" questioned Tip Lange.

"Not that we know of, Tip. But this woman says her sister must be in a terribly bad way. She lives in a tumble-down shanty of a house around the next corner, that must be a heap deeper in the water than this one is. If it hasn't floated away before now it's apt to go any old time. The current is too swift for us to hold our own with oars, and besides, this is such a heavy boat."

"Then you want us to try for it, do you, Wash?" demanded Tip. "How about it, Commodore? Will the launch stand out against that current?"

"I believe so," replied Hugh, and then, turning to Wash, he continued: "Did you say it was around that corner, and to the left toward the river?"

Wash looked at the woman, who had been listening to this talk while wringing her hands in anguish. She eagerly nodded her head and exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, it is that way, Mister. She's got

three childer, too, and her man he is working on the railroad plenty miles away. Please get them safe; and do not forget to bring the bed clothes, too. The childer freeze without some covers."

She waved both hands distractedly, as though beseeching them to hurry. Indeed, with that terrible current growing more and more violent with the passage of time, as the flood kept on rising, there was indeed much need for haste. And some of the flimsily built dwellings of the poorer classes in the manufacturing town of Lawrence had already washed away, the boys had heard, being carried off piecemeal by the greedy waters.

Hugh did not linger. All they had to do was to back away until the boat could be turned, and then manage to round the designated corner. They would very likely discover the house where the woman and the three "childer" lived, and who had been trapped by the flood.

Once they cleared the sheltering wall the full force of the speeding current struck them, so that Hugh found it absolutely necessary to

put the little three-horse engine to its best "licks" in order to make headway.

"I see the house!" cried Billy, on the look-out. "There are youngsters in the upper windows waving bits of white rag to us. We've got to hurry, boys, or we'll be too late after all. That old shanty is ready to go to pieces right now!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE HELPING HAND.

All of the scouts could see that what Billy said was the actual truth. Somehow the water made through this street with considerable more force than the one they had just come from, where Wash and his set were as busy as beavers.

"Look at it sway, would you?" exclaimed Monkey Stallings, a note of genuine anxiety showing in his quivering voice.

"Oh! what would we do if it rolled over, with those poor children inside?" Billy was saying, as though trying to get his wits centered on the critical situation, so that he might be quick to act in case such a dreadful emergency arose.

"Don't mention it!" cried Tip Lange, who was looking rather peaked and white himself, if the truth must be told, though he tried very hard to force a smile smacking of confidence on his face.

"Can we make it, do you think, Hugh?" Billy continued. "Is the engine powerful enough to knock up against the old current here? It's just like the sluiceway of a mill. It comes down through the street so fierce and wild."

"Oh, no trouble about that part of it," the pilot assured him. "What I have to look out for is to keep away from the lower side."

"I see what you mean," Monkey observed sagaciously. "If the building should go over it would be a bad thing for us to get caught. That's why you want to keep away from the lower side, Hugh, I guess."

Hugh did not bother answering. He had his hands full with managing the boat, for that current made its course rather erratic.

Gradually they were drawing around the end of the old building. Up in the window the children could be seen. They no longer waved white bits of rag to attract the attention of those in the launch. Instead, they acted as though alarmed, because it must have seemed to them that the rescue boat meant to pass by and leave them to the mercy of the raging flood.

Their cries were pitiful. Billy could not stand it, so he cupped his hands in order to make his voice carry above all the other sounds, and shouted words of encouragement.

"Don't be afraid there, we're not going to leave you! But it's necessary for us to come around on the side of the house, don't you see? Move around with us and get ready to come aboard. We'll get you safe ashore all right!"

They must have understood from his words and encouraging signs what he meant, for their agonized cries ceased, though they continued to watch the progress of the launch with an eagerness that might easily be excused.

"I guess now that if any of us happened to be in that shaky old trap, expecting it to roll over any minute, we'd feel scared pretty bad, too," remarked Tip Lange, as if he thought it his duty to make apologies for the fright of the helpless inmates.

With the three "childer" was the poor mother, who had seemed just as badly alarmed as her crying brood, though she had not called out to the approaching rescuers.

Hugh saw that his chance had come. He proceeded to lay the launch alongside the build-

ing in such a way that he could keep the propeller constantly moving, and thus be in a state of preparedness, so that should the house give signs of toppling over, it would be possible for them to escape a catastrophe.

"I'll have to stick to my engine, boys," Hugh told them. "So you must do the work. First thing is to get all of them aboard. After that we can try to save a part of their things, particularly clothes and bed coverings. Get that?"

All of the others answered in the affirmative. Every fellow had his teeth set, and grim determination could be seen in their eyes as they prepared to cheat the flood out of its prospective victims.

Hugh calculated to a nicety when he brought the boat against the quivering wall of the doomed dwelling. The three children filled the window just alongside, and the eager mother crouched further back, bent on seeing them safe before she would think of leaving. That was the mother spirit every time, Billy Worth told himself, sacrificing her own chances for the sake of those she loved.

"Here you are!" he cried, as standing there he held out his hands toward the almost wild

youngsters. "One at a time, now, and don't crowd so. Give me the smallest first, the baby! There. Now the next one, and plenty of time for all!"

Although Billy said this, he was not quite so sure of it in his own mind, for he could see the building swaying back and forth in a terrifying manner, and did not know but that it might be lifted off its foundations at the next surge.

He succeeded in placing the three children safely in the launch. Then only would the relieved mother consent to clamber through the open window and join her little family in the rocking boat.

"Shall we try for some of their stuff, Hugh?" asked Monkey Stallings, who, being as agile as the animal after which he had been named, was better fitted for climbing into the house and taking chances with its upsetting than possibly any of his mates.

"Yes, but make quick work of it, and if you do go down, get free from the wreck as fast as you can. We'll stand by to pick you up," Hugh told him, though he was himself a little dubious about the wisdom of such a course.

"Count on me with you there," said Tip

Lange firmly. He did not mean that all the credit of this rescue should pass from the local troop. If they were to receive the praise that would come later on, they must merit it to some degree.

So the two agile scouts clambered through the window one after the other. It was anything but a pleasant sensation they experienced when the house gave an additionally severe roll.

"She's going!" whooped Monkey; but as the threatened catastrophe failed to come about he managed to recover himself; and presently they became partly used to that strange sensation which in the beginning had almost made them seasick.

A hurried hunt was made for clothes. Fortunately the woman had gathered these together some time before, when meaning to try and escape from the house, but being deterred when she found that the water was already over the head of her youngest child.

Garments of various kinds, such as poor people might possess, together with a bundle of bed quilts that took the place of more expensive blankets lay handy to the scouts. These

the boys quickly seized upon and dumped through the window, being cautious enough to make sure that the boat still rubbed against the side of the building in the same place they had left it.

Altogether Monkey and Tip were possibly not in there more than three minutes, if that long. And, although neither of them said so, it was apparent from the haste with which they clambered out again that both felt considerable relief in being able to leave in good shape.

Hugh saw that it was the height of folly to linger another second, now that they had accomplished all they meant to undertake. Accordingly he put on more speed, and with the others pushing away from the house they quickly left it astern.

The rescued children were all staring at their late home. Humble though it may have been, still they must have cherished feelings of affection for the roof that had lately sheltered them.

All at once they uttered a concerted cry as of terror.

"There she goes!" called out Billy, almost

in awe; and as Hugh glanced toward the house they had just left he was in time to see it roll completely over, and then float down with the swirling current to become its plaything until finally it would go to pieces.

"Well, we didn't get out of there any too soon, seems like!" said Tip Lange, not a vestige of color in his face, as he turned to stare at his new-found friends.

"I'm glad to be here instead of swimming out yonder," commented Monkey dryly.

"And if we couldn't manage to find an open window quick enough, think of what a time we'd be having in there!" added the Lawrence scout. "But let's be thankful it didn't happen that way."

"We Wolf Patrol fellows," said Billy Worth, "have noticed that when things get to looking dark for us there's always a quick change for the better. We call it Wolf luck, and seems like we've even come to look for it."

"Well, I only hope it's as catching as the measles, and that you've given it to me," Tip told him, "so that after this our troop will meet a favoring current. It's easy to move along when everything seems to be going your way."

The next thing was to get the woman and her children safely ashore. Hugh picked out a place where he thought it would be best to land them. In doing this he bore in mind the fact that she had relatives who were being assisted by Wash Bradford and his squad.

In the end it was managed so that they all came together on high ground, where they could find some sort of shelter in case the rain started coming down again, as seemed likely to happen at any minute.

Once more the launch was ready to start out on its mission of mercy, with the four scouts as eager as ever to do all they could to help the unfortunate victims of the great flood.

"If I had half a chance, and the stuff along," ventured Billy, "do you know what I'd do, fellows? Why, make a flag of white, with a red cross in the center. If this isn't the sort of relief work those people do then I miss my guess. But since I've only got a handkerchief, and nary a speck of red cloth along, I'll have to let it pass. Hugh, there's a gentleman beckoning to you over there. I wonder what he can want."

"I think I know who he is," said Tip Lange.

"Yes, that's Mr. Hungerford, the mayor of our town, and a mighty fine man at that. Better run in and see what he wants, Hugh, if you think best."

"I certainly will," was the immediate reply of the pilot, as he changed the course of the launch until they came close to where the gentleman stood.

"What can we do for you, Mr. Hungerford?" called out Tip, thinking that as he knew the mayor he ought to take it upon himself to interrogate him.

"You Boy Scouts are covering yourselves with honor and glory to-day, I want to tell you in the first place," said the gentleman. "Lawrence isn't going to forget it, either, understand. I saw you landing that family, and the other boys in the boat doing just as well. Besides I've watched some of your crowd working a raft through one of the quieter streets to load up with people or goods. But I believe we can now take pretty good care of all those in danger in the town. With your means for getting around it would be a splendid thing, boys, if you started up the flooded valley to see what good you could do."

"Yes, sir, we were just meaning to do that," Hugh assured him.

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the mayor, a little of the worried look on his face disappearing. "Reports have been brought in that they are having a truly terrible time of it all along up there; and I am sure you will find dozens of things you can do to save life and property. God bless you, boys! Lawrence is proud of her sons this day. Now, make all reasonable haste, and play your part in this terrible drama that has been thrust upon us. Good-by, and the best of luck to you!"

They waved their hats, and gave the mayor a parting cheer as Hugh started the throbbing motor on at full speed. And it can be readily asserted that Tip Lange's heart was swelling with a song of thanksgiving in that he believed the scouts of Lawrence had at last been afforded a glorious chance to come into their own.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAWN OF THE SCOUTS' DAY.

"Oh! did you ever see such a sight as that?" cried Tip Lange, after they had presently turned into the section that lay back of Lawrence.

No wonder the boy was amazed and almost terrified. It was a spectacle calculated to make any one rub eyes, and wonder whether it was not all a dream.

All his life Tip Lange, living in the town of Lawrence, had been accustomed to seeing that broad and fertile valley green with growing crops and grass and trees in the summer, or covered with a white mantle of snow when the season changed. But now it lay there a tremendous inland sea, water everywhere, with bunches of trees, or it might be farmhouses and barns, visible in various quarters.

Fences were mostly far under the surface. Some people were paddling around on hastily constructed rafts, and trying desperately to

save a small portion of their personal property. A few boats were also in evidence, but these seemed to be leaky, and of little value so far as doing the work of rescue went.

"Why, it must be all of two miles across from hill to hill!" declared Billy, as he stared in awe at the wonderful sight, and began to realize more than ever the majesty of such an amazing flood, backing up into the valleys, and inundating a thousand homes and farms.

"Those who were wise got to the hills long ago, I reckon," Monkey Stallings ventured to say, as they began to push along swiftly through this inland sea.

"And let's hope that covers most of the people living in the valley," Hugh added. "There are always some who will not believe things can be as bad as they seem to their neighbors; or who hate to leave their property so much that they take the risk of staying. Those are the kind we've got to find and help."

"I only hope we can do it all before night comes along," said Tip, "because if the water keeps on rising it will be a terrible night for anybody stranded in a farmhouse, with the rain beating down, and mebbe the wind blow-

ing great guns, for they say there's another furious storm headed this way, you know."

"What shall we do first, Hugh?" asked Billy.

"I'm depending on you fellows to use your eyes and tell me if you can see a white flag of distress waving in any direction," the pilot replied. "It would seem that if people wanted to be taken off they'd have the sense to rig up some sort of a signal of distress."

"Why, over there, those people in that boat are waving to us now!" cried Monkey Stallings. "They seem to be baling out at a crazy rate, and I guess the old ship is threatening to sink under 'em."

Hugh instantly changed his course, and headed for the foundering boat. Those who were aboard the craft did not cease their efforts to keep afloat, and doubtless watched the approaching launch with anxious eyes.

Fortunately there was no catastrophe, and in good time the scouts had the chance to rescue them. It turned out that they were an old couple, badly frightened when one of their oars broke, and they found that the leaking boat

threatened to go down with them, far from land.

They had quite a quantity of stuff aboard, and seemed to set such store by it that the boys could not refuse to save it. Already the boat was filling with water since no further effort was being made to keep it down; and before long it would be almost level with the gunwale, when it might drift about in that condition.

Hugh decided that it would be a waste of time to try and land the fugitives of the flood as fast as they were rescued. They could be kept aboard until their number had increased to a respectable figure, when the run to the nearest shore would be undertaken.

Hardly had they again started on than Tip gave notice that he had sighted another signal of distress.

"I wish I had marine glasses along," he said, after directing Hugh how to point the boat's nose, "then I could tell what that means. Seems to me somebody must be swimming, and waving a handkerchief or something."

"No, I think you're wrong there, Tip," Billy observed, after he had stared intently at the object ahead, while Monkey Stallings contin-

ued to wave a piece of white cloth he had picked up, so as to assure the imperiled ones their signal had been seen. "They don't seem to be moving at all. P'raps they're sitting on some sort of raft, low down near the surface of the water."

As the launch was making pretty good time, of course the scouts rapidly approached closer to the object of their curiosity. Many were the guesses they continued to make in trying to solve the mystery.

Finally it was determined that those they were drawing near must be standing on some rock or mound, for there was no sign of a farmhouse near them.

This proved to be the actual case. There were seven in the party, a man, his wife, and five children. They had started to wade from their farmhouse to the hills, thinking it could be done; but the water kept on getting deeper and deeper until they became frightened and dared proceed no further.

When they turned to go back, the sight of all that wide sweep of agitated water appalled them; so they had clung to the little rise of ground they had accidentally struck, hoping

and praying that some boat or raft would come to their assistance.

They were a thankful crowd when the scouts managed to get them all aboard; and a dripping one into the bargain.

"We've just *got* to get ashore now, Hugh," remarked Billy, after the last of the seven had been helped into the launch, this being the father of the family.

"Yes, they're shivering as it is, and will soon take severe colds in this raw air," decided the pilot of the expedition, as he started the engine, and headed straight toward a point which he had already picked out as the best place for the fugitives to be landed.

"We'll see to it that they have a jolly big fire going before we leave them," Billy continued; for he was very fond of a fire himself, and believed that it was likely to be a solid comfort to shipwrecked people.

"That's a good idea," commented the patrol leader, who knew he could leave all that sort of things to his chum, for Billy was a great hand to look out for the material side of things.

As they drew nearer the point they found that there were already people there, who may

have reached there by wading through the water when it was not so high; or else by boat or raft. At any rate there seemed to be quite a number of them, watching the approach of the launch with the intense interest that forlorn fugitives, chased out of their homes by a flood, always show in newcomers.

"And think of them not even having the sense to get a roaring fire going," remarked Billy, "with all that good fuel around them, too! Well, some folks hardly know enough to come in out of the rain. If this scout business is doing one thing for the boys of America, it's teaching them to use their brains and do things. The next generation isn't going to be near as helpless as this one."

"There's a log leading out into the water, Hugh!" cried Monkey Stallings. "You wouldn't want to ask for a better place to run alongside. We can get our cargo over the side in great shape."

Apparently Hugh thought likewise, for he at once aimed to draw up by the log. It proved all that the Stallings boy had prophesied, and as some of the scouts began to assist their passengers ashore the load was soon lightened.

Then while Tip and Hugh and Monkey began to carry the bundles with them, Billy cast around for a suitable place in which to build the fire he contemplated starting. Undoubtedly those hapless people would have good cause to remember the khaki of a scout with feelings of gratitude; and in the future it was going to be reckoned a badge of honor indeed for any fellow around Lawrence to be wearing such a suit.

Billy exercised his knowledge of such things to start his blaze in a place where it would burn best with that wind prevailing. He interested some of the children in the task of dragging plenty of fuel forward, so that in a very short time he had a jolly blaze leaping upward.

It was wonderful what a difference that fire made in the feelings of those stranded people. Why, with the coming of its genial warmth and glow, the look of woful anxiety began to leave their faces. They gathered around, held out their hands to the fire, and even started talking hopefully concerning the future.

Those who had been standing in the water up to their waists, and whom the cool air had caused to shiver, now began to steam as they

sat to the leeward of the fire, regardless of what smoke blew in their faces, so long as they could feel comfortable again.

Billy was not yet satisfied. It might start raining at any time, and unless some sort of temporary shelter were provided, these people would soon be wet to the skin.

Accordingly he showed the men how a scout would make a shelter out of boughs if he found himself overtaken by night in the woods. While this might not answer as well as a tent, at the same time, if properly made, it would shed most of the rain, and with the aid of the fire tend to keep them fairly comfortable until they knew what next to do.

Help would of course come from the good people who happened to live on the higher ground, and who might be depended on to see to it that these unfortunates at least did not starve. When the raging waters went down, and the river shrank back into its normal bed, they would once more take up the task of trying to restore their ruined homes in the great level valley, once so prosperous.

Much as the scouts would have liked to have stayed longer, so as to help still further, they

felt that they owed it to other victims of the flood that they get busy again. These were only a small fraction of the valley sufferers, and could not expect to monopolize the time of those who had the launch, possibly the only power boat in all that vicinity.

From the way in which Hugh started off, Billy Worth determined that he must have some settled plan in his mind, although nothing had been spoken with regard to it.

He looked beyond the boat's bow, and while far away he could see what seemed to be farm buildings, nothing in the way of a fluttering signal of distress caught his eye.

"Still Hugh knows what he's doing, never fear," Billy told himself, because he had had many a practical demonstration along these lines, and felt unlimited confidence in his superior.

His curiosity continued to grow the closer they came to the abandoned farm buildings, until finally Billy could hold in no longer.

"Hugh," he said, "you're meaning to do something, I take it, at that place, because you've headed straight this way from the time we left shore; but look as hard as I can I've

failed to see a sign of life about the farmhouse."

Hugh smiled, because he had been anticipating some such remark, having noticed the uneasy movements and puzzled looks of his chum.

"That's where one of the men ashore lives," he started to explain. "He was speaking to me about it, and begged me as a favor to come out here right away on an errand of mercy. They were away from home when the flood came, you see, and couldn't get back here to do anything."

"What does he want you to do for him? Was there any one left at home? Does he expect us to salvage some of his best furniture and clothes for him, Hugh?"

"Neither one nor the other, Billy. The fact of the matter is he wants me to do something to save a pair of valuable work horses that are shut up in the lower part of his stable, where they may drown there in their stalls if the flood rises a couple of feet more!"

CHAPTER IX.

GATHERING THEM IN.

Now, as Billy loved horses, he was ready to applaud the plan suggested by Hugh.

"It ought to be easy to open the door of the stable," he observed. "Like as not the horses have broken loose from their mangers long before now, with the place filling with water and giving them a scare. But if they haven't, why I'll guarantee to get in there some way and cut them free."

"That must be the stable yonder," called out Stallings, who had heard what was passing between his friends.

"Yes," Hugh assented, "it's got a stone basement, he told me, which would be apt to hold out for quite some time against the water, because there's little current up here, and only the sweep of the wind to fear."

The launch was steered so as to come up alongside that part of the stable where they could see the door was situated. This was

now half under water, and if found to be locked Hugh would have to use the key the farmer had thought to put in his hand before they left the land.

"First time a boat ever called at their door, I bet you!" said Tip. "I know the folks, and have been here at their place more than once."

He and Monkey Stallings held the launch steady while Billy tried the door.

"Locked, Hugh, and here's the padlock six inches under water," he remarked, in a disgusted tone. "We'll have to try and break in, I reckon."

"No, take this key the owner gave me," Hugh explained. "Be careful not to let it slip out of your grip, or we will be in a hole."

Billy promised to be cautious, and after a little fumbling managed to undo the big padlock.

"Wait and we'll get the boat out of the way so the door can be drawn back," Tip Lange told him. "Then the poor animals can wade or swim out as they please, if it happens they're loose."

A number of whinnies had come from inside the stable, showing that the imprisoned

horses recognized the presence of human beings, and perhaps understood that a way would be opened for their exit.

"I can hear them thrashing about a good deal," Monkey announced, "which I would take to mean they might be free from their halters and hitching ropes."

Billy maintained his grip on the door, and as the others pushed the launch slowly along an opening began to appear. Hardly had the door swung halfway open before a horse's head appeared in sight, and out came an animal, swimming like a muskrat, only its head, neck, and a small portion of its back being visible.

"There's the second old chap, all right!" exclaimed Billy, as another head followed the tail of the first horse. "Did he say there were only two of them, Hugh?"

"That's the extent of the misery here," came the prompt reply. "But look over yonder, will you, at the chickens perched on that coop; yes, and turkeys, too. Poor things, they're apt to be pretty hungry before they get a meal again."

"Oh! what's that swimming around over there?" demanded Tip. "I do believe it's a dog; yes, and Farmer Jones did have a fine

watch dog. I remember he had him chained to a kennel somewhere about there."

"We can't pass by without trying to give the poor fellow a chance for his life," Hugh declared, as he headed toward the spot where the moving object had been observed.

"He sees us now," said Tip. "But, say, the poor fellow is so rank tired swimming that he just can't give even a yelp, let alone a joyful bark. Chances are he sat on top of his kennel till the water got so deep he had to swim; and as he's fastened with a chain he'd soon have been drowned if we hadn't come along."

When they came up to the dog Tip spoke kindly to him, calling him Carlo. Then he took hold and managed in some way to unfasten the animal's collar. Of course this freed Carlo from the detaining chain that had come very near being his death. Tip and Monkey Stallings assisted the big dog to clamber over the side.

The very first thing Carlo did was to scatter showers of drops all around him, which called for loud protestations from the boys. But after that the rescued dog seemed to want to

show his affection by licking any one of the boys' hands he could find. What better proof could they have of his gratitude than that?

"There are those horses swimming after us," said Billy. "If we keep on, we'll be like a traveling circus coming to town, with all the queer things we rescue. I suppose now the next job is to gather in all those fowls there, eh, Hugh?"

"Well, we'll have to forego that pleasure just now, Billy. There may be human beings in need of our coming. I'm afraid the chickens and turkeys will have to take their chances.

"If any hungry coons happen along this way, the chickens won't be apt to die a lingering death, or one by drowning either. A twist of the neck would see their finish," said Billy.

"I don't like the way those horses keep swimming after us, Hugh," protested Tip.

"Oh! they want to be sociable," laughed Billy, "but we're leaving them in the lurch faster now, and soon they'll give it up. When that happens they'll most likely swim to the nearest shore, eh, Hugh?"

"No question about it," the pilot assured him. "Horses and cows have some sense

about them. Even on a black night they'd know where the shore lay. It must be what we call intuition, and which takes the place of reasoning powers with animals and birds."

"Yes, and with frogs and toads, too," said Billy. "I've picked up a toad many a time and thrown him as far out in the lake as I could; but let me tell you I never yet saw him strike out; he'd head for the shore every time, swimming for all he was worth, like he thought a black bass would snap him up."

"What time do you think it is?" asked Monkey Stallings from up in the bow where he was keeping a lookout—he called it the "crow's nest," because he had read that on board a ship that is where a man is stationed to sweep the horizon with his marine glasses from time to time.

"Just three o'clock," replied Hugh, and as there was no sun to tell him, he must have glanced at his watch in order to say it so positively.

"We've got two hours or so more of daylight to work in," Tip remarked. "Then we'll have the time of our lives crawling back home

in the dark, without any of us knowing our bearings in the night."

"Oh, it isn't going to be quite that bad," sang out Monkey. "Uncle always keeps plenty of lights aboard. There's even a reflector that can be hung up here in the bow. It is one of those acetylene gas affairs, and makes a dazzling white light."

"Good enough!" cried Billy. "If we're hard pushed we can keep up our rescue work into the night. I'd hate to think we'd left a single poor chap to drown when we might exert ourselves a little extra and save him."

"There, the horses have given us up as a bad job, and they've turned toward the land, you see!" announced Tip triumphantly. As he patted the head of Carlo, the dog pushed up close alongside him.

"Sorry to say, it's raining again," added Billy. "You can see it on the water."

"That's a bad thing all around for those who are without a shelter," Hugh observed. "Of course it matters very little to us, because we have a canopy overhead, and curtains if we want to use them. I'm afraid the end is a long way off still."

"But from now on the rise isn't apt to be so rapid, you see," Tip continued. "It takes a lot more water to make an inch when it's spread over such a big lot of territory. Here are miles and miles covered, and it's the same way in other low places. Half of the country up in this region must be afloat."

Pushing on, they approached what seemed to be a nest of houses and outbuildings built for sociability's sake at the adjoining corners of the farms, so as to make a little community in the dull winter time.

"Looks like there are some people left there, because I saw a signal flutter!" announced Monkey Stallings.

"It's unusually low ground around here," said Tip. "I remember the place well, and they have the finest garden and truck patches of any about town when things are going on naturally. But the whole place looks now like it had been struck by lightning, and then by a cloudburst. The Williams live in the near house, and you can see that the water is up over the top of the lower story. There's some one on the rooftree waving to us."

"But I saw a white thing moving in that tree nearby," declared Billy, "and if you listen you'll hear them screeching right now."

"Help! help! we're all drowning! Oh! hurry and come to save us!"

Tip was seen to be smiling.

"Say, I know who that is, all right," he told the others. "There's a queer little old woman at the Williams house, the sassiest and quickest with her tongue you ever did hear, and they say she's that set in her ways nobody ever can make her do a thing she'd opposed to. Yes, that must be Miss Maria screeching, and she's perched up in that tree, all right, like a guinea hen. We're going to have a fine time of it getting *her* down, let me tell you, if she happens to be afraid of the limb breaking."

When the launch drew up alongside the house it was found that three persons had perched on the ridgepole of the roof, and were clinging there in great distress of body and mind. One of them was a brawny farm hand, another a heavy-set woman, while the third was a small negro.

The last immediately slipped down the slope of the roof and managed to squirm aboard the

boat, as though not meaning to let this fine chance escape him. It was something of a task to get the big woman safely down; but Monkey Stallings volunteered to climb up with a clothes line and make some sort of a "check," so that with the help of the strong hired man she was finally successfully taken aboard.

"Is that Miss Maria in the tree there?" Tip asked the man, after Hugh had learned that there were no others about the house needing assistance.

"Jest who it is," was the answer of the hired man. "She got skeered 'baout the house right in the start, an' sez it was apt to be kerried away, which a tree wouldn't because it's got roots. I helped her get up among the branches, but they hain't be'n a minute sense thet she hain't kept whoopin' it up. And haow she's a-goin' to be took daown beats me."

The launch was soon under the tree, and sure enough trouble began immediately. The little old woman was perched fairly high up, though even at that she doubtless often imagined the rising flood was touching her dangling feet. She declared she was afraid to move so as to come down. Monkey went up to assist

her, but she continued to cling desperately to her limb and say she was afraid.

At Hugh's suggestion Monkey even carried up the rope, and, passing it over a limb above her head, fastened a loop under her arms. This was to inspire her with confidence; but she kept her grip, and gave them all manner of trouble.

"I warned you what you'd run up against," chuckled Tip. "I know the lady of old. When she sets her mind it sticks! Serve her right if we sailed away and left her up there in her old tree to camp out."

"Well, we can't do that," said Hugh, frowning. "They say that if the mountain won't come to you, it's up to you to go to the mountain. We're going to get her down, and that right away. And, Billy, I'm going to leave that part of the job to you. The rest hang on to the rope, and keep it taut, so she won't fall and get hurt. We'll remove her support, which is the only way. Here, Billy, you're a good hand with a hatchet; climb up there and cut that limb close to the tree. Never mind what she says to you. Some people don't know

what's good for them, and even have to be saved against their will. Now, up with you, and get busy, Billy boy."

CHAPTER X.

MR. JASPER CHANGES HIS MIND.

Billy Worth entered into the game with his customary eagerness. There had been so much of tragedy connected with their experiences thus far in the rescue of the numerous flood victims, that what promised to be a rift in the clouds appealed to him with considerable force. Billy was always ready for fun.

He saw that Hugh was following the example of a famous man, Alexander the Great, who, when offered the Gordian knot to unravel, simply cut it with his sword. Since so much remained to be done for others, they could not afford to waste time with a captious old woman who, having been hoisted to that limb, was afraid to let go of it for fear lest she should be dropped into that terrible waste of water below.

So Billy took the hatchet and began to climb the tree. Miss Maria did not at first comprehend what his intentions were, and even start-

ed scolding the boy for meaning to force her to put her faith in that slender clothes line.

When he deliberately began to hack away at the limb upon which she placed her faith, she realized the impending catastrophe, and shrilly chided him for what she called his treachery.

Billy kept grimly at work. He was making splendid progress, for it happened that the boat hatchet had a keen edge, and Billy had always prided himself on being something of a woodsman chopper.

"Hold hard below!" he called out presently, at which Miss Maria gave a shriek and changed her hold from the security of the now bending limb to the clothes line over her head.

Hugh and the others made sure to have the rope taut, for they saw that the limb was getting ready to fall of its own weight, since Billy had cut more than halfway through it.

Then came a crackling sound, more shrieks from the little old maid, and she was discovered dangling in the air, kicking furiously, and almost wild with fright.

Suppressing their desire to laugh, Hugh and his comrades immediately started to lower her by slacking up on their end of the rope. When

she came within reach they guided her into the boat, although in more or less danger of having their share of knocks from her energetic kicks into space.

When she found that she had been safely landed, Miss Maria almost collapsed; but at least she appeared to be so completely out of breath that the scouts were spared another scolding harangue.

The rope recovered, they had no further reason to remain in that vicinity. When they could do so without the little old maid's keen eye being fastened on them, Billy and Tip and Monkey would exchange grins and suggestive shrugs; but they were very careful to keep straight faces if they fancied she were watching them.

Hugh had mapped out a plan of campaign when starting up the valley. It was his intention to cover the inundated territory fully, so that when they turned back to town they could feel they had not left any one at the mercy of the flood who should have been looked after.

So he kept changing his course in what might be called a zigzag way, now steering toward the left shore, and again heading in the

direction of the opposite one. Billy called it "tacking," for their advance up the valley was by a series of eccentric movements.

Shortly after having rescued Miss Maria in a manner which she would never recall without more or less resentment, the scouts discovered another waving signal that meant trouble. In this instance it was a farmer who was known to be well to do, and who had quite a family, among the rest a couplé of boys of twelve and fourteen.

They had lingered too long at home, from some cause or other, and were in somewhat of a panic lest the night come on to find them facing dreadful hours of darkness and despair.

Hugh was surprised at the lack of smartness shown by those two lusty lads. He was sure that if they had belonged to the scouts they would at least have found some way of constructing a safety device in the shape of a raft by means of which the entire family might have been ferried across the water to the high land.

The coming of the launch was the signal for more or less cheering on the part of these two boys. They had let their stock loose some time

before, so that it had probably found safety in the distant hills, swimming the flood.

As they had done on other occasions, Hugh and his comrades bustled about, and not only got the farmer and his family aboard but managed to also save a few bundles of wearing apparel that the good housewife insisted on taking along.

"The farmer seems to keep watching us as if he had something on his mind," was what Hugh whispered to Tip Lange about the time they were ready to once more make a start, intending to land all their passengers the next time they drew in to the shore.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he has," replied the Lawrence scout, "and I think I can give a pretty close guess what it is."

"Suppose you tell me, then?" suggested the patrol leader.

"Why, you see, when we started this scout racket here, his two boys, Tad and Ben Jasper, were mighty wild to join the troop, but their dad put his foot down flat against any such 'foolishness,' as he called it. He seemed to have the idea in his head, like a lot of other people do who will not take the trouble to read

the Boy Scout Manual, and learn what the movement represents, that it was intended just to make soldiers of all American boys as they do over in Europe. And no one could ever get him to listen to reason, though my father and others tried to show him."

"I kind of suspected it might be that way," said Hugh, with a smile. "That would account for the helplessness of his boys when they found themselves up against a situation like this. Scouts would have had that family ashore hours ago. They have never learned to think for themselves. I hope it's going to prove a grand lesson for Mr. Jasper; and let me make a prediction, Tip, which is that inside of two weeks you'll be enrolling the names of Tad and Ben Jasper on your roster."

Sure enough, when they were approaching the land, Mr. Jasper, looking as though he had something on his mind that would give him no peace until he had it out, opened the conversation by remarking:

"Is this the sort of thing you scouts learn to do, Tipton Lange? Because, if it teaches boys to be self-reliant and brave and obliging, I'm going to look deeper into the scheme. I

realize now that there's something lacking about my lads. They should have been able to do something to get us out of this scrape. And if being Boy Scouts will build them up so they can take the bit in their teeth and go ahead when a necessity comes along, why, I want to know all about it."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, sir," declared Tip, flushing with pleasure, while Tad and Ben pushed nearer, their faces displaying an eagerness they could not disguise. "And my father will be pleased to have you call on him to hear what he has to say about the scout movement."

"Tell him about the bridge affair, Tip!" suggested Billy, although Hugh made a movement with his hand, and frowned as though he did not like the idea of being forced to hear himself praised.

Tip, however, was only too willing. The time did not allow of any elaborate yarn spinning, but in a brief recital he explained to Mr. Jasper the difference between sheer recklessness and true bravery as exhibited by the actions of Tug Wilson and Hugh Hardin.

Mr. Jasper insisted on shaking the patrol leader's hand after Tip had finished.

"If that is what it does for boys," he said heartily, "then my sons shall join a troop at the first opportunity. I don't want them to grow up with the idea of being soldiers and fighting just for the love of war; but like every father I do hope they will always be brave and self-reliant. Yes, I shall certainly look into this thing. It has been a lesson to me."

"Mr. Jasper," said Billy, unable to keep from getting a few "licks" in while he had the chance, "if you were in Lawrence at this very minute you would find more than a dozen scouts in khaki working like beavers with boats and rafts, the last made by themselves, saving stranded people, and trying to salvage some of their possessions before the flood took their houses, for where the current is swift it carries buildings away."

"If that is true, son," said the wealthy old farmer, "then the future of the Boy Scout movement in Lawrence is assured, depend on that. I've been heading the opposition, but now that my eyes have been opened I'll be just

as hard a worker in its favor, you can depend on that."

"Hurrah!" cried Billy, waving his hat, as did also Monkey Stallings and Tip, but Hugh was too busy making a landing just then to take his eyes off the shore, or his hands off the wheel.

So they put their human freight, together with Carlo, the big dog, ashore, although the latter did not seem to want to leave his new friends. The Jasper boys wore broad smiles, and no one would ever have suspected that for the time being they were castaways and fugitives from their destroyed home. The fact of the matter was that they had begun to look upon all this privation as a means to an end. Boys always do have a weakness for any Crusoe sort of business; and what they had heard their father say concerning his change of views had filled their hearts with a new joy that could not be crushed just because they were temporary exiles.

"Two more turns across ought to finish our patrol duty," said Hugh, as the boat again started out upon the wide stretch of dismal waters.

"Then we might get back to town in time to be of some more use there before the night settles down," proposed Billy.

"That light rain has stopped, for one thing," remarked Monkey Stallings, trying to discover some loophole of encouragement.

"We'll hope it doesn't start in again," said Billy quickly. "The weather sharps were away off their base when they said another storm was headed in our direction. Well, I wondered what that was coming this way, but now I can see it's some sort of big animal swimming."

"A cow it seems like to me," ventured Tip Lange. "Yet it's got a big head and gilt balls on its horns. Must be that prize bull Mr. Jasper owns."

"I think you've hit it that time," Monkey told him. "I reckon the beast may have been trying to stand on some knoll that was higher than the surrounding land, and finally had to swim for it. Look at him making straight for the boat, will you? I've heard that when frightened domestic animals will turn to human company for help, and it seems like that is so. Hey! what ails the engine, Hugh?" for

the launch had suddenly ceased to keep moving ahead.

"I've got to fix something, and there's no getting around it," replied the patrol leader. "We can't risk the danger of an explosion. Five or ten minutes ought to be enough time."

"But that bull looks like he meant to come aboard here!" ejaculated Monkey, as the swimming beast drew near, with his head breaking through the surface of the water, part of his broad back showing, and his long tail streaming in the rear after the manner of a rudder.

"Get the hook!" shouted Billy, suiting the action to the word by snatching up the push pole, with which he stood on guard. "Here, you, keep off! We're not in the beef-packing line just now. Head for the shore, and put in your best licks. Why didn't you keep company with the rest of your herd, instead of loafing out here? No, you don't, old boy! We couldn't think of letting you get your hoofs over our rail; you'd sink us in a hurry. Shout at him, everybody, and shoo him off before he upsets the launch!"

CHAPTER XI.

A DARING RESCUE.

"There he goes, and a good riddance!" announced Tip Lange, as after having been prodded and shouted at vigorously, the swimming animal doubtless came to the conclusion that he was not wanted, and began to make a straight line for the shore.

"He manages to get along all right for one of his heft, I take it," asserted Billy reflectively. "Which goes to show that because a fellow is stout it's no reason he should be reckoned clumsy, nor yet slow."

This doubtless was a matter of more or less satisfaction to Billy, because he had often been "joshed" by his chums on account of his increasing waistline.

They crossed over and back without discovering another case of "help wanted."

"Looks as if we had cleaned things up pretty tidily around here," observed Tip Lange, with a touch of pride in his manner, "unless

we choose to start in moving families' belongings from their flooded houses. And as that would be too big an undertaking for us to go into, I guess we don't care to make a beginning."

"Which way now, Hugh?" asked Billy. "Can we head back to town? I'm wondering how the other fellows are coming along with their share of the work, and whether we could help them out in any way."

"Yes; I'm going to make for the outlet of the valley," the pilot told him. "We could run up in the rear of the town, but it's better to go back as we came."

"And a good thing we can get out of this mess before night sets in," Monkey remarked over his shoulder, for he was sprawled like a big toad in the bow, so that he might keep a lookout for any snags in their course, Hugh having delegated him for that duty.

There was very little movement to the water in the flooded valley, except as the wind happened to blow, and just then it was almost calm. So the launch went cheerily on its way, as though with every *rat-tat-tat* explosion it rejoiced over the fact of having been instru-

mental in saving so many persons from all sorts of suffering, both mental and physical.

Tip Lange seemed to be feeling especially fine. This was doubtless caused by the fact that things were working for the revival of the scout movement in Lawrence. He had been hearing some pretty handsome compliments of late from the mayor, and then Mr. Jasper, once the most disliked man in all Lawrence among scout circles on account of his well-known animosity toward the movement.

How wonderfully had the atmosphere been cleared, and all because of the magnificent opportunity that had come along whereby the wearers of the much-abused khaki were given a chance to show what they were good for!

"Talk about blessings in disguise," Tip had to say, as he sat near Hugh and watched the other tinkering with the working motor, trying to improve its action by slight changes, "this flood may mean a whole lot of trouble to lots of folks, but it's going to be the making of Lawrence Troop, believe me."

"Well, your worst enemy now is a booster," replied Hugh, smiling to see how the great change in the conditions was affecting Tip,

who seemed to be smiling most all the time now. "It's easy to see that you're going to have smooth sailing here. Put your shoulder to the wheel, Tip, and never again allow yourself to give up to despair. Try and believe the sun is shining back of the clouds, and that it's always darkest just before dawn."

"Dawn has come for us, I reckon, Hugh, and we owe the most of it to——"

"There, I don't want to listen to any talk like that, Tip. At least keep it until I'm back home in Oakvale. Then if you fellows here think I can give you any good advice, or help you to build up your troop, write me."

"You'll hear from us, never fear," said the other significantly, as though even then he had some vague idea in his mind as to the way in which he and his brother scouts of Lawrence Troop ought to suitably thank these two strangers for all they had done toward starting the ball rolling again.

"We're close to the river, Hugh!" sang out Monkey Stallings, "and, gee whiz! how it does seem to be booming along out there! Some current, that, let me tell you. Do you think we could work up against it if we had to, Hugh?"

"Oh, I reckon we could," the pilot replied carelessly, "though it'd be slow work, and if the engine took a notion to give out we'd have to get our anchor overboard in a hurry to hold fast. But so far as we know there's no need of our trying such a risky thing as that."

"Why, look there, boys, isn't that a house floating along, and bobbing up and down like a cork? Now she turns one way and then another. Some poor family has lost their home up above. It's too bad, and I only hope they all managed to get safe to the hills before the cabin went. Oh! what's that clinging to the roof? Seems to me it moved then! Yes, as sure as anything it's alive!"

As the scout in the bow made this loud outcry, the others all strained their eyes to see. Even Hugh diverted his attention from the steering gear and the working motor to look.

"It's a boy!" declared Tip Lange, almost immediately.

"And the poor fellow looks like he would soon be tumbled into the river when that cabin takes a notion to turn all the way over!" added Billy.

"Oh! what can we do?" cried Monkey, his

voice filled with pity. "Hugh, would you dare chase after that floating house and try to rescue the poor chap?"

Hugh had to think quickly when the question was put up to him in that way. Naturally his first impulse would be to say "go," because he felt keenly for the desperate situation of that boy who dared not leave his floating refuge. It might be because he could not swim, and that raging torrent was enough to give the best swimmer reason for holding back. Still, Hugh had also to remember that it would be risking four lives for one if he decided to make the try.

"We'll save him if we can," he said finally, after looking everything in the face. "If the current is too swift to let us get back again to-night, why what's to hinder our tying up to the bank and waiting? There'll be another day coming."

"Yes, and scouts ought to know how to rustle for grub at some house they'd find ashore," added Billy, who, it may be remembered, was especially fond of hearing the dinner bell ring, or catching some other camp summons that told of a waiting meal.

"Full speed ahead!" sang out Monkey, evidently entering into the spirit of the occasion with his customary zeal.

The floating cabin had a pretty good start of them, Hugh knew, but once the launch had reached the river, and turned down, they must speedily overcome this lead. He had no fears about not being able to overtake the runaway cabin, though when they presently started with the speeding current their progress was so swift that it almost made one dizzy to watch the shore line, so rapidly did it seem to glide past.

"We're catching up hand over fist!" announced Monkey enthusiastically, from his post in the bow; but he no longer held this alone, since both Tip and Billy were crowded in alongside.

"And he's still hanging on!" announced the Lawrence scout. "Good for him, whoever the little chap is. I like his grit!"

"Huh! I kind of guess he can't do much else but hang on with all his might," commented Billy. "There, didn't you see him wave his hand at us then?"

"He's discovered us, all right," observed

Monkey, "and like as not it gives him a new lot of strength to know we're heading after him, poor kid."

"Don't forget to watch out for snags," warned Hugh, "because going at this rate, if we ever banged into a log, it would be all up with the launch. And perhaps we'd be glad to climb up on that cabin roof with the boy."

"Whew! I hope we don't come to that yet a while, Hugh!" said Monkey. "I'm keeping a bright lookout for any floaters all the time. It isn't near as bad as if we were breasting the current, you know. Then they'd hit us a savage smash, while now we're all going the same way, only we're beating everything else out of sight."

Billy, seeing the imperiled boy once more waving his hand, took it upon himself to give him a return salute with his campaign hat. At the same time he let out a vigorous shout in hopes of cheering the poor castaway.

Already they had gone a mile or so below the flooded town, but they were rapidly overhauling the floating cabin.

"We'll get him, don't you fear," Billy was saying, half to himself, as though he may have

been doubtful up to then. "That cabin is going to behave, and not act like a bucking broncho to toss him off, even if it does lurch and bog something scandalous. Give him a cheer, boys, to hearten him more. Now, altogether!"

So they ran down alongside the cabin. They had discovered some time back that their conclusion about its being a half-grown boy who was clinging to the roof of the floating house was correct. He looked peaked and white, indeed, though it could be seen that he was beginning to pluck up new courage as he saw them drawing ever nearer.

"How'll we get him aboard without running too much risk, Hugh?" asked Billy.

"First get your rope ready," the pilot told him. "Have a loop in the end just as you did for Miss Maria. Then when I pull alongside throw it up to him. Once he gets that loop under his arms, and we can be sure of drawing him aboard even if he happened to make a slip and fall overboard."

"I like the scheme, Hugh," was the only comment Billy made as he hurriedly took up the accommodating clothes line, at the end of which he found the same running noose that

had played such a prominent part in the saving of the little old maid who had persisted in clinging to her perch in the tree.

"Guess I can fling it all right, even if the room isn't all I'd like," Billy remarked as he arranged the coils the way he had seen some Western cowboys do many a time in a Wild West show. "Please back off, Tip, and get on my other side. And, Monkey, hold the push pole out of the way when you hold off from the cabin. All ready here, Hugh. Bring her closer, will you?"

Hugh was calculating the distance. He wanted to succeed in their present undertaking because that boy's life was just as valuable as any other they had saved during the momentous day. At the same time Hugh did not wish to make any blunder apt to cost them dear.

Billy saw his chance, and giving the necessary toss sent the coils of rope across the roof of the teetering cabin.

"Get hold of that rope, and slip the loop under your arms!" he called out as loud as he could, for the water was making a lot of noise as it swirled about the cabin and the launch, forming fierce eddies and little whirlpools.

The boy was not so badly frightened now. He could do what he was told, they saw with considerable relief. Had it been otherwise one of the rescuing party, perhaps the agile Monkey Stallings, would have been compelled to clamber up to the roof and have accomplished the dangerous work in that way.

"Now, pull the noose tight!" continued Billy, when he saw the boy had followed out his command. "Make your way toward this end of the roof, and be ready to jump when I say so. Don't be afraid of falling in; we've got the rope tight, and can yank you out of the river as quick as a flash if you should miss. Steady now, and it's going to be as easy as falling off a log."

In this fashion, then, did Billy coax the boy to crawl along the reeling roof of the cabin until he had reached the edge. Then, when the right second came, and the building was inclined toward them, he suddenly called out:

"Jump, boy, jump!"

The lad had faith enough to believe what Billy so confidently told him. He sprang without hesitation, struck the edge of the launch,

and then several eager hands seized upon him before he could fall back into the water.

And as Hugh backed away from the tumbling cabin he joined his chums in letting out a loud shout that relieved their pent-up feelings as nothing else could have done.

CHAPTER XII.

WELL-EARNED PRAISE.

It was just as Hugh had expected.

The launch was turned so that her head pointed upstream again, but out there, in the middle of the river, the current proved to be so strong that, although the motor worked madly, they gained very little headway. Even when Hugh crept in closer to the shore, where they might have a better chance to proceed, he realized that it was hopeless trying to get back to town under several hours.

As the night was now ready to close in upon them, the danger of meeting with an accident warned the careful pilot against attempting anything like this.

"Keep on the lookout for a good tying-up place, boys," he told them. "If you see a tree close to the water, and what looks like a little cove below it, that's the spot we want to stop at."

"And let's hope," added Billy, sighing, "that

there'll be a hospitable farmer, or some sort of kind-hearted man with a house up on the hillside where we can beg a bite to eat."

"There are all sorts of pots and pans and kitchen things aboard," Monkey told them, "if only we can lay hold of anything to cook."

"Leave that to me," remarked Billy loftily, determination written on his face.

The landing was effected without any particular trouble, and with the cable they tied the launch up to the friendly tree, as well as made the boat fast astern.

Billy hardly waited for this to be done before he was off. Evidently he had discovered that they were close to the river road, at this point well elevated. Tip had told him that people lived here and there all along this thoroughfare, although very likely they could not get anywhere now, with the water so high, for in places the road must be covered ten feet or more with the flood.

The night began to creep around them, but there was no rain, for which all of them thought they had reason to be thankful.

Upon questioning the boy who had been taken off the floating cabin, Hugh learned just

how it happened that he came there. He had been away from home when his folks must have fled because of the rising water. Coming back later he had not known what to do, but remained cowering in the home until the rising water caused him to take to the roof. And later on, when the current started the cabin downstream, there he was helpless, because he did not know the first thing about swimming.

"You'd have known that at any rate if you'd been a scout," Hugh told him, always ready to plant the seed broadcast, "though that mightn't have helped you much. It was lucky you stuck to the cabin. We'll see that you get back with your folks all right, Tommy, never fear. I'm only wondering what your mother will be thinking when she misses you."

"There comes Billy!" cried Monkey Stallings, excitedly. "Say, he looks as if he might be just loaded down with stuff. Chances are he found a deserted house, and made a raid on the pantry."

"That's where you've got another guess coming," said Billy Worth, as he started to relieve himself of his numerous packages. "By the

greatest good luck in the wide world I hit on the house of a gentleman named Judge Coffin. Seems that he's been one of your best backers, Tip, here in Lawrence. When he heard what the scouts had been doing he told me the house was mine, and that I could have anything I wanted. Fact is, he loaded me down with good things; and he's coming over here to eat dinner with us in an hour!"

Tip threw up his hat and crowed as though he might be an exultant barnyard rooster that had just whipped his worst enemy.

"Oh! what luck!" he exclaimed. "Everything seems to be coming my way. I think you Oakvale fellows must have brought it along with you. 'It never rains but it pours,' and I don't care if I haven't any umbrella either. Let's get busy and give the judge the best camp supper he ever heard about."

"We can do that, too, Tip," intimated Monkey. "This fellow Billy Worth has all the French *chefs* beat to a frazzle when he gets to slinging the pots and pans around. You'll think so after you get a whiff of his cooking."

"That's a whole lot taffy, and don't you take any stock in it, Tip," protested the said Billy.

"Course I like to cook some, and, if I do say it myself, I know how to do a few plain things fairly decent. But we'll all lend a hand. Here, Monkey, you start the ball rolling by peeling these potatoes, while I look after the fire aboard the boat, for everything is soaked out here."

The owner of the launch must have delighted to take little excursions on his boat, for he had everything on board that would be needed for getting up a meal, even to a three-burner blue-flame kerosene stove that worked splendidly, Billy soon discovered.

In spite of all they had gone through, the boys entered into the duty of getting up that supper with the greatest of vim. And when later on an elderly gentleman, whom Tip introduced to them as Judge Coffin, made his appearance, he found the meal ready to be served.

He was a man whose heart had always remained fresh, and who loved boys, although his twin sons had been cruelly taken from him years before through an accident, simply because no one with them had known the first thing about reviving a person who had been in the water until he seemed to be drowned.

Judge Coffin firmly believed that had the comrades of his boys been posted as all scouts of to-day are on these important methods of resuscitation, one or both of his precious twins might have been spared to him. And that was the secret of his belief in the scout movement as a means of saving life.

There on board the launch, and while enjoying such a supper as he had not sat down to for many years, no doubt—primitive though the table and the tin dishes may have been—he listened while the scouts modestly told what a great day they had had.

And, reading between the lines, that astute lawyer could easily understand how the coming of Hugh Hardin to Lawrence just when the breaking down of the railroad embankment brought about his enforced stay there had been the main cause for all this service on the part of the local scouts.

How his eyes shone as he looked fondly at the boy who had dashed upon the imperiled bridge and saved the reckless bully, Tug Wilson, as Tip persisted in telling the story, despite Hugh's remonstrance and embarrassed manner. No doubt Judge Coffin was saying,

deep down in his heart, that had his boys only lived he could not wish anything grander for either of them than that they might take pattern after this brave yet modest scout from Oakvale.

Long he lingered—indeed, it seemed hard work for the worthy gentleman to tear himself away from the company of those four gallant boys.

"Have no fear, Tipton," he said, as he shook the hand of each after bidding them "good-night" for the third time, "there are bright days ahead for you and your comrades of Lawrence Troop. When such a scout hater as Neighbor Jasper has had the scales lifted from his eyes, all opposition is bound to cease. A reaction is going to set in, and you'll have more recruits applying for admission to your ranks than you can well take care of."

All of the scouts voted the judge one of the finest men they had ever met. He seemed to have a faculty for entering into the inmost recesses of a boy's heart, and finding lodgment there.

"How are we going to manage for to-night?" asked Tip Lange, some time after the

judge had taken his departure, and they began to feel more or less sleepy.

It turned out that the Lawrence scout had had very little experience in camping. He and his comrades of the local troop had met with so many backsets in their efforts to build up an enduring organization that their outings had been few and unhappy.

Hugh had been thinking this over himself, and now expressed his views.

"I suppose we might manage to sleep aboard the launch, though it would be a tight squeeze for us all. Two might do it comfortably, and the others camp ashore."

"What's to hinder all of us spending the night here on the bank?" asked Tip; "I know I'd enjoy it a whole lot better than being cooped up on the old launch."

"My sentiments exactly," declared Billy; "and to tell you the truth I'm getting so sleepy right now I hardly care where I drop down, so long as I'm let alone."

"How about you, Monkey?" demanded Hugh.

"Oh, all I need is a tree with a decent limb to the same! You know I'm something like

a bat or a 'possum, and I c'n hang head-down from a branch without any bother. Count me in any game you've got on the calendar."

"That's settled, then," asserted Hugh.

"There are some blankets and robes in the lockers of the boat, you know," suggested Billy, as he scrambled to his feet to stretch himself before starting aboard the launch again.

When a thorough search had been made it was found that there were plenty of covers for the entire quartet.

"Couldn't be better if we'd planned for this little camping trip," remarked Monkey, as he began to look around for a good place in which to make up his bed, such as it was going to be.

"The song of the flooded river will be a regular lullaby," suggested Hugh.

"It may be to you fellows," observed Tip; "but I own up that I'm not used to going to sleep in the open, and it's likely to keep me awake. If I do manage to drop off, the chances are I'll dream of poor people hanging to the roofs of houses that are floating down the river and falling to pieces."

"You can stand it for one night, though, Tip," Billy told him.

"Besides, it's going to be an experience for you worth having," Monkey told him. "When you meet your chums again you can crow over them."

"That's right," admitted Tip, as he watched closely to see how the others fixed their blankets, so that he could imitate them.

"One good thing," remarked Billy, after another tremendous yawn, "this isn't like being up in the wild woods where a bear or a panther might take a notion to drop in on us."

Hugh knew that Billy was saying this to get an opinion from some of the others. Perhaps he was feeling a trifle uneasy over sleeping there in the open.

"I don't think there's any danger of our camp being invaded by an animal more dangerous than a wandering cow that might have got lost in all the excitement," Hugh assured him.

Billy seemed to be satisfied with that convincing statement, for presently he crawled under his blanket.

"Good-night, fellows!" he said in a thick voice as if already half asleep.

Tip looked as though he really envied Billy his indifference. Just as he had said it would very likely prove a difficult task for the new camper to lose himself in slumber.

Hugh waited until all the others had apparently settled down. There was the fire to look after, for with so much dampness in the air he did not think it advisable to let it go out entirely.

That was where his long experience in camping would prove valuable, for Hugh knew just how to arrange the fire so that it would burn for hours at a stretch without needing replenishing.

Finally he, too, crawled under his coverings and settled down as best he could to get some sleep, of which they were all in such need.

They had had a pretty lively day of it considering, and it was little wonder Hugh felt more or less tired.

The noisy flood might continue to boom and gurgle as it rushed along near by, but that would not keep the patrol leader from slumber. Many times in the past he had experienced

worse conditions and refused to be kept awake.

The last thing he remembered noticing was the crackling fire sending its red tongues upward as it seized upon the fresh fuel.

Hugh awoke with a start, and no wonder. Someone was calling aloud, and the burden of his cries were of a nature to cause alarm:

"Hugh! oh! Hugh, wake up! There's something raiding our camp! It tried to carry me off!"

That was Billy whooping it up, as Hugh discovered when he rolled out of his blanket.

Monkey Stallings was already on his feet, being a wonderfully agile chap. He had looked around in his quick fashion, and not discovering any terrible tiger or other beast of prey in sight, naturally turned on the disturber of his peace.

"You've gone and got the nightmare, that's what's the matter, Billy Worth!" he told the other. "It's a nice state of affairs when a fellow can't get his sleep out. I knew you'd pay for eating so much supper. You just dreamed it all. I'd like to see what'd try to carry *you* off!"

Billy, however, was firmly convinced that it had not been a dream but a positive reality.

"Guess I ought to know," he declared; "didn't I feel it lifting me up, and growling like everything in the bargain? First I was scared so I seemed to be turned into ice. Then I let out that first whoop."

"Oh, then it ran away, did it?" sneered the unbelieving Monkey.

"Just what it did," asserted Billy.

"Did you see it, Billy?" asked Hugh, determined to sift this midnight alarm to the bottom while about it.

"Why, Hugh," Billy went on to say, "I had a little trouble getting my cover away from my face, for I'd snuggled down in the same to keep my head warm. But as sure as I'm standing here, Hugh, I saw the bushes moving over there, like some terrible animal had gone that way. Let's throw some stones and scare him off!"

"No need of that," said Hugh, with a chuckle, as he picked up a club and then started directly toward the quarter pointed out by Billy.

"Take care, Hugh, or he might get you!"

warned Monkey, at the same time casting about for the duplicate of the cudgel the patrol leader had taken as a weapon of defense.

"Shoo!" cried Hugh, waving his arms vigorously as he approached the bushes.

As though that cry and the accompanying movement had broken the spell of silence there came a whole chorus of grunts both big and little. There was also a great scurrying of feet, together with squeals that could have but one meaning to the scouts.

"Pigs!" gasped Billy, as a mother sow followed by half a dozen little porkers started off in a panic, rushing pell-mell away, and followed by the mocking shouts of Monkey Stallings.

"So that's your tiger, is it, Billy?" he demanded as he prepared to once more crawl into his coverings; "well, you certainly have got the liveliest imagination of any fellow I ever met. The idea of taking a poor old mother hog with her litter of suckling pigs for a monster trying to carry you off."

"Well, she did root under my blanket, I tell you," Billy insisted; "and being waked up so suddenly, how could I tell the difference be-

tween a grunt and a growl? I only hope she stays away the rest of the night and lets a poor tired scout get his regular sleep."

Apparently it would require much more than an occurrence of this sort to keep Billy wakeful. Inside of ten minutes Hugh could hear his regular breathing, from which he concluded the other was again off to the land of dreams.

The balance of the night passed without any further alarm. Perhaps Tip did not secure much sleep, and was the happiest fellow in the party to see the gray dawn coming in the east. Still, it had been a great experience for Tip, and one he would not soon forget.

All of the boys were soon up and doing. While two of them saw to it that the blankets and other coverings were returned to the launch, the others looked after the preparations for their morning meal which, thanks to the generous judge, would not be as primitive as it might have been.

After they had eaten breakfast, the start was made up the current. Monkey had been smart enough to fix some sort of tally so as to know how high the river rose while they slept.

"Just seven inches, fellows," he had an-

nounced the first thing; and then, as the expedition was about to leave their moorings, Monkey declared with considerable delight: "Would you believe it, the water is actually *going down!* Sure it is, for here you can see where the stick is wet for an inch above the level!"

"Bully!" cried Tip. "Things will soon be on the mend, and poor old Lawrence will get back to looking like it was before the flood, all but our bridge, which is gone where the woodbine twineth."

"Never mind about that," said Billy, "so long as none of your folks went downstream with it."

They found it slow work breasting the current, but then, as a rift appeared in the leaden clouds overhead, everyone was soon feeling greatly encouraged.

"There's the judge waving to us!" said Tip, and of course everyone hastened to reply to the salutation from the high ground back of which the home of their good friend lay, safe from danger.

All through that day the scouts found plenty to do with the launch. And many a mother

and father had reason to thank them warmly for attentions received that were doubly welcome in such a time of stress.

Hugh kept his word and saw to it that Tommy was safely returned to his family, thus relieving the fears of the father and mother, who had begun to believe the little fellow had been drowned.

As there still seemed to be no way of getting back home unless they went by aëroplane, Hugh and Billy and Monkey had to remain over for another day or so, nor did they feel sorry that this happened. Monkey had interested his uncle in his two chums so that nothing would do but they must be his guests while in town. Tip Lange felt somewhat disappointed for he had hoped to coax them to go home with him.

But on the second day word came that the repairs had progressed so far with the washed portions of the railroad embankment that a train would pass through Lawrence early that afternoon bound east.

It was at the station, as our three young friends, together with Tip Lange, Wash Bradford, Teddy McQuade, and Wallie Cramer,

were waiting for the train to appear that quite a crowd of older people, as well as all the rest of the Boy Scouts in town surprised them. At the head of the delegation was the worthy Mayor of Lawrence. When Hugh saw them coming he began to show signs of uneasiness; but there was no place to which he could retreat, nor would the other fellows allow it.

And so he had to stand there and listen to as neat a flood of oratory as could be imagined, as the Mayor told him, and his two chums in the bargain, that they carried away from Lawrence the best wishes of all those who dwelt there.

"Your visit was in the nature of an inspiration," the Mayor wound up with. "It has certainly put new life into our local troop of scouts. We owe you more than mere words can tell, and in leaving us we want you to know that you will never be forgotten. Your noble work here in the time of our tribulation will always stand as a living example of what Boy Scouts can accomplish when their hearts are in the cause."

Fortunately the coming of the train allowed Hugh to escape without making a reply to this

flood of praise that came straight from the heart of the speaker. And the last they saw of the Lawrence scouts they were lined up and giving their comrades from Oakvale the grand salute, with Tip Lange at their head.

Later on Hugh heard from the boys, and was delighted to know that the troop was flourishing like a green bay tree. There arrived at Hugh's home a loving cup purchased by donations from scores of Lawrence citizens, and which was accompanied by a letter which might well cause the recipients to feel proud they had been given an opportunity to be of service to the victims of the Great Flood.

If you want to know what undertaking next employed the attention of these wide-awake Oakvale lads, read the succeeding volume, entitled: "THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE FIELD HOSPITAL."

THE END.